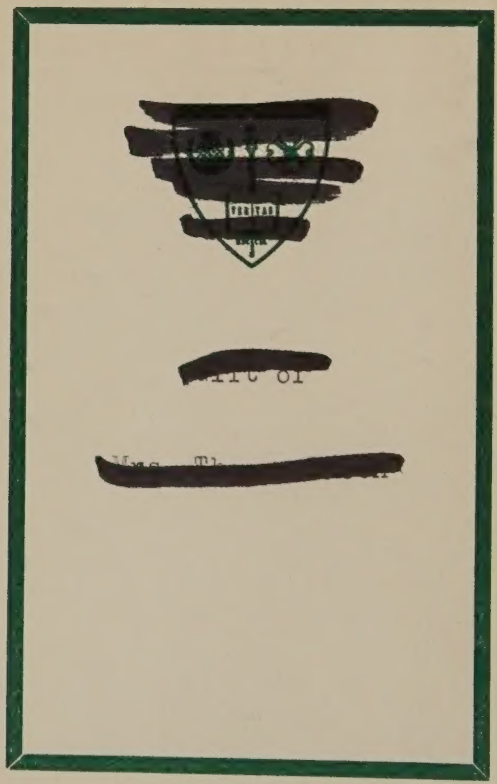
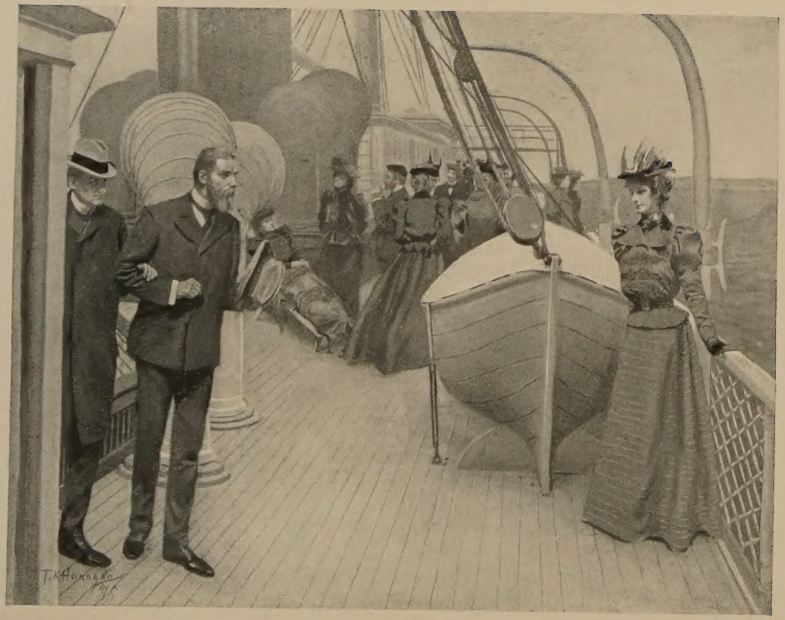
A PRINCE OF GEORGIA
AND OTHER TALES

JULIAN RALPH

BETHANY
COLLEGE
LIBRARY
DISCARD



Morgan Clarke
18 West College



[Page 10

"THE PRINCE CAME ON DECK AND BOWED TO HER"

A PRINCE OF GEORGIA AND OTHER TALES

By

JULIAN RALPH

AUTHOR OF

"AN ANGEL IN A WEB" "ALONE IN CHINA"

"PEOPLE WE PASS" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK AND LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

1899

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

AN ANGEL IN A WEB. A Novel. Illustrated by W. T. Smedley. Post 8vo, Cloth, $1 50.

The author . . . has woven a most entertaining metaphysical romance for the edification of his many readers. —*Lutheran Observer*, Philadelphia.

ALONE IN CHINA, and Other Stories. Illustrated by C. D. Weldon. Post 8vo, Cloth, $2 00.

PEOPLE WE PASS. Stories of Life among the Masses of New York City. Illustrated. Post 8vo, Cloth, $1 25.

DIXIE; or, Southern Scenes and Sketches. 8vo, Cloth, $2 50.

HARPER'S CHICAGO AND THE WORLD'S FAIR, the Chapters on the Exposition being Collated from Official Sources and Approved by the Department of Publicity and Promotion of the Columbian Exposition. Illustrated. 8vo, Cloth, $3 00.

OUR GREAT WEST. A Study of the Present Conditions and Future Possibilities of the New Commonwealths and Capitals of the United States. 8vo, Cloth, $2 50.

ON CANADA'S FRONTIER. Sketches of History, Sport, and Adventure; and of the Indians, Missionaries, Fur-traders, and Newer Settlers of Western Canada. Illustrated. 8vo, Cloth, $2 50.

NEW YORK AND LONDON:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

Copyright, 1899, by Harper & Brothers.

All rights reserved.

TO

THE MEMBERS

AND

THE HAPPY VACATIONS

OF

THE RED IBIS CLUB

THIS BOOK

Is Dedicated

813.7
R131p

85639

THE first two of the tales in this book were published in HARPER'S MAGAZINE. "A Dandy at his Best" and "My Borrowed Torpedo-Boat" appeared in HARPER'S ROUND TABLE. "The Sad Fate of a New Woman" was written for the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and appears in this collection by the kind permission of the editor, John Brisben Walker, Esq. The story called "Mrs. Ruppert's Christmas" is a piece of reporting done for the New York *Sun* several years ago; out of consideration for those concerned, the surname of the family in this tale has now been changed to one that is fictitious.

THE AUTHOR

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A Prince of Georgia	1
When the Clouds Fell Down	39
A Dandy at His Best	73
The Sad Fate of a New Woman	94
Mrs. Ruppert's Christmas	112
My Borrowed Torpedo-Boat	121
Bruce's Mighty Weakness	140

ILLUSTRATIONS

"THE PRINCE CAME ON DECK AND BOWED TO HER" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

A GEORGIAN VILLAGE NEAR BATOUM . . . . *Facing p.* 14

MINGRELIAN WOMEN—"THE PEOPLE WE SPRANG FROM ARE STILL THE MOST BEAUTIFUL" . " 16

"A TALL, GRAY-BEARDED MOUNTAINEER". . . " 18

THE TINY SHOPS OF THE PERSIAN QUARTER, TIFLIS . . . . . " 20

TIFLIS—"THE SAVAGE-RUSHING KUR" . . . . " 22

A MERCHANT IN THE PERSIAN QUARTER, TIFLIS " 24

A CAUCASIAN ARMENIAN IN NATIONAL COSTUME " 26

A GEORGIAN MOTHER . . . . . " 28

A STATION ON THE MILITARY WAY . . . . . " 32

"OVER THE CAUCASUS, AND HOME". . . . . " 34

"HE RECOGNIZED THEM WHEN TEN FEET AWAY" " 36

IN THE CURIO-DEALER'S SHOP . . . . . " 48

IN THE BLACK FOG. . . . . " 64

THE FIRST MAN CARRIED A TORCH . . . . . " 86

"'I AM DENISOV, OF THE POLICE'". . . . . " 126

A PRINCE OF GEORGIA

"YOU are going to have the great sensation of your life," said a young naval lieutenant who had made the trip upon which Ethel Barrowe was starting, and she remembered the prophecy day after day as the "great sensation" spun itself out. It was a sight-seeing sensation that he meant to predict, for Miss Barrowe was going through southern Russia as far as Batoum, and then across the Caucasus, and so back again. Eccentric old Mrs. Barrowe, her rich aunt, had invited her to leave home in Cincinnati and visit her in Athens, where the old lady employed her wealth and leisure in the pursuit of such pious and humane projects as the succor of the Cretans and the relief of the Armenians—projects which the scoffers among her friends characterized as "dreams," and other persons, of less importance to her — the leading statesmen of continental Europe — regarded as mischievous nightmares. Now that she had her pretty niece to entertain,

she was starting upon a journey she never would have made alone, to show the young woman what the Russians call their Riviera and their Switzerland, and to meet those Armenians through whom she had been generously contributing for the cause of their oppressed brethren in Turkey.

"Dreams," did I call her amusements? Then both women were dreamers, because Miss Ethel was a poor girl floated above the trials of her position by her fond hopes, for she knew that her aunt liked her better than any relative she had, and she aspired to become her heir. And now she was about to cross Europe and penetrate Asia — she who until a month before had never been twenty miles from Cincinnati, and in that city learned no more of the world than one gets from membership of a Baptist sewing circle, a progressive euchre club, and a course of the talk-about novels of each year.

On the way to Moscow and southward to the Black Sea the lieutenant's prediction lost weight. The Czar's wheat and cabbage farm, called Russia, is mainly a great flat dish of earth, with a dull sky bent down all around to meet the rim—a tiresome monotone of grass and grain, flecked with villages of wretched cabins with thatched roofs, brown as so many rats in a granary. If there is

variety, its effect on the mind more than offsets the little pleasure it brings to the eyes, for it must consist of an over-costly church and of the squalid people who have built it. But by nine o'clock on the third day from Moscow the earth began to rumple into broken limestone hills, guttered with canyons and crevices. Orchards appeared, and the shade trees became willows and locusts, instead of the incessant pines and birches of older Russia. The houses changed into the modern Greek type —one-storied stucco or stone, painted white or yellow, roofed with heavy red tiles, always walled around, and usually showing the soft round tops of small trees staring over the walls.

Suddenly the train crawled out of a tunnel to the edge of a cliff overlooking the blue, yellow, and white port of Sebastopol. Beyond the blue of the harbor, dotted with stately men-of-war, lay a bigger reach of liquid indigo — the Black Sea. It was October, and only the day before all Russia, apparently, had been whitened by hoar-frost. But now the car windows, all opened, let in air as warm as the breathings of cattle. Arrived at the station, the travellers found themselves in a Levantine city, with the usual white houses, gray streets, and limp and dusty trees. The cabs, like

so many miller-moths settled near a lamp, were wicker-bodied victorias under white cloth canopies, and the drivers wore white bell-crowned hats. The drive to the hotel showed that Sebastopol was beautiful, but to our ladies it was like getting back to Greece, and they determined to press onward. They found that the *Grand-Duchess Olga* was to sail next day for Yalta and Batoum, and they at once engaged passage. On her deck the task of watching to see their baggage put aboard was given to Miss Ethel, who was presently interested in the foreign travellers, their leave-takings, in which the men kissed each other on both cheeks, and the bustle at the gang-plank. Suddenly a fragment of conversation interested her.

"He's a prince," she heard a man say in English —and she forgot the foreign scenes, and even her anxiety about the baggage.

Two Englishmen had been bidding good-bye to two Russian-looking men, who now came up the plank to the deck, leaving the Englishmen on the wharf. Miss Ethel saw that the voyagers were an elderly, smooth-shaven, black-haired man, who walked slowly and weakly, like an invalid, and a tall, sandy-bearded man of thirty who followed, carrying a sword, an umbrella, and some walking-sticks tied together.

"Bon voyage," called out one of the Englishmen, adding, in a lower tone: "Queer, isn't it? One would naturally say, 'He's going with a prince,' but, on the contrary, a prince is going with him."

"Prince, eh?" the other repeated, questioningly.

"Yes; a Georgian prince; with a family older than any in Europe, of course. All those Georgian families date back to King David, or to some Chinese emperor of centuries before Christ. He's a genuine prince, though, whatever doubt there may be about a few of the early centuries in his family history. Can't help feeling sorry that—" and here the men turned, and she heard no more. She glanced at the deck to see the noble, but he—she was sure it was the younger one—had gone below. Presently the baggage came, and in a very few minutes the *Grand-Duchess Olga* was trembling with the power she exerted in throwing out a lacelike train of white bubbles far behind her.

Miss Ethel annoyed her aunt by opening the bags and trunks to find her bright red Russian blouse—the newest, most fetching thing she owned—and her bonnet with the red wings, and her gray skirt with the fine stripes. And she spent more than half an hour over her hair and her hands.

"We agreed to wear only our knock-about

things on shipboard, Ethel," her aunt said, "and now you're dressing as if for an evening party."

"Oh no, aunty; but it's so warm and summer-like, and the people who are going to Yalta are all so fashionably dressed, I thought I'd put on something cool, and show these Russians that we have nice things as well as they."

"Oh, well, if it's a patriotic matter—" said the elder lady, and there abandoned the sentence. Far from being humbugged, she determined to discover the reason for the sudden fine apparelling of her niece.

Miss Ethel was radiant when she went to the saloon for luncheon. She knew she looked her best, and when even a plain girl has that consciousness, it sets off her good points to advantage. But she was far from plain. She was tall and well rounded, with a high brow crowning an oval face, with sensitive brown eyes, and fine soft brown hair, an arched nose, and lips so full as to betoken an ardent nature, and yet firm enough to show thorough self-control. Two things about her were eloquent of her right to belong to the country that most prizes good women, and has given every one of them a throne. These were her confident carriage, independent without suggesting impudence, and her eyes that flashed every emotion quicker

than telegraphy, because there was no waiting to spell out long words like amusement, or sympathy, or intelligence; they were flashed on her quick orbs like magic. Thus her smallest features vitalized and characterized her entire personality.

But even her intelligence did not forearm her for the discovery that all the seats in the dining-saloon were taken. She mentioned this to a waiter—and he shrugged his shoulders.

"What shall we do?" she asked her aunt.

"If madame weel assept my place," said a gentleman, rising to put a hand to his breast and make a low courtesy. It was the prince. Miss Ethel gasped for some polite phrase that was called too suddenly to come.

"Thank you, but one place will scarcely do for two," said the old lady.

"I weel do ze sing," said the prince, and went and got a camp-stool, and bade those who were on either side of him move closer while he squeezed in the extra seat. Then he bowed again and stepped back, and moved the chair and stool, while the ladies took their places at the table. And he pushed the chairs under them when they were sitting down; not only that, but he got an extra napkin and opened it, and laid it across Miss Ethel's lap, which was a very peculiar thing, she

thought, except that, perhaps, princes were not to be judged by the usages of ordinary folk.

"Thank you so much," said Miss Ethel; "but what will you do?"

"Please, I s'all wait, leetle," said the prince, bowing again, so that his light reddish beard almost touched her back hair.

"How polite he is!" said she, when he had taken himself off.

"Humph!" said her aunt, and fell to eating her soup. "I think I would almost sooner have waited myself," she added.

"It *is* too bad," her niece replied.

"I mean that I would rather have waited than have had such a fuss—and with such a man."

"Such a— Why, aunt, he's a prince?"

"Indeed! He made me creep."

"No; but really, aunty, he is a prince, and of one of the most ancient noble families. I overheard two gentlemen, who were bidding him goodbye, talking—I'm sure he was the one they meant—and the one who knew all about him said there was no doubt about his—his royalty, don't you call it?"

"Well," said Mrs. Barrowe, "princes are at a great discount in Greece since the war, and I never was able to see the use of them before that.

He may be a prince, but I did not think him much of a *man*. Bless me! how he must have upset me! I know nothing whatever of the creature—and only hear how I'm going on!"

"I should say so, dear aunt!" Miss Ethel said. "As for me, he's the only prince I ever saw, and I thought him most polite and amiable. He is certainly more unselfish than any other man in all this crowd."

"That is true," said Mrs. Barrowe. "I'll grant that by way of apology. So let's drop the matter."

They ate in silence, for both found their thoughts engrossing. Miss Ethel was staggered by the good and bad fortune that fell, with two quick strokes, upon her—the good being the meeting with a prince, and the other her aunt's unaccountable, uncharacteristic repugnance to him at first sight. As for the elder lady, she was well pleased with herself for having so quickly discovered why her niece had put on her finery.

The passengers crowded the deck in the afternoon, and the Americans saw many Russian fashionables at their ease. Several young dignitaries lounged about in gold-trimmed suits of pongee silk that needed washing. Many elegantly dressed young ladies, very vain, and swaying between fits

of giggling and of petulance, promenaded with their parents, while several of the matrons walked about smoking cigarettes. The men smoked incessantly, and drank almost as constantly. The deck-house was always full of them, behind their glasses of vodka or bottles of wine or beer, each man drinking, unsociably, by himself. When Miss Ethel was about to turn her attention to the cliffs, close to which the ship laid her course, the prince came on deck and bowed to her, and no scenery short of a volcanic eruption could have enlisted her attention.

My description and hers of this nobleman would not seem to be of the same person. She found him about thirty, tall, stately, with a very distinguished carriage, intelligent blue eyes, lovely flaxen hair, a noble head, an aristocratic face, and a silky, ruddy beard. To me he appeared loosely built and awkward, his eyes colorless and too shifting, the back of his head as flat as a drum, and for his beard, hair, and complexion, all three were sandy. But for his title, I should never have noticed him.

He slowly led the way to a seat by the ship's rail for an elderly man, who was evidently an invalid and of an irritable nature, as his face and the snarl in his voice told all who came near.

"Shall I find you a book, colonel?" the prince inquired.

"Go to the devil!" snarled the sick man. "You are a nuisance."

"I am sorry," said the prince, submissively.

"Well, go away, go away!" growled the invalid, whereupon the prince went and sat in the deck-house behind a bottle of beer, where Miss Ethel saw him as she walked to and fro. She did not hear the conversation between the two men, and if she had, she would not have understood a word.

It was almost dark when the ship reached the beautiful horseshoe-shaped scallop in the hills which is famous as the harbor of Yalta. The hills, always beside the sea, sent their towering sides sheer down to its edge, and were jewelled with a grand monastery here, noble mansions there, and, nearer Yalta, an imperial palace embowered in park foliage. Regretfully the Americans found they were only to make a short night-time stop at this place, to which the noble and rich repair in autumn to eat grapes medicinally, to entertain in châteaux, and to crowd in fashionable hotels. The ladies went ashore and drove beside the curving beach. They mingled with the gay crowd in the largest hotel, heard the band in its

garden, and, in a little kiosk over the water's edge, took tea in Russian fashion, in a thin glass on a saucer, with two cubes of sugar, a slice of lemon, and a spoon beside the glass. Perhaps it was the tea that caused the younger lady to lie awake until late in the night trying to picture the prince mingling with the lively, laughing crowds at the main hotel in Yalta, smiled on by haughty women, and deferred to by eminent and masterful men of commoner clay. She wished every one had not left the ship at Yalta, or else that she had left it also.

On the next day, when the ship dropped anchor far beyond a large sprawling yellow town called Kertch, and while Miss Ethel was in a torment lest her aunt should not come on deck in time to catch the tender that was to take them ashore while the ship spent some hours in coaling, who should appear but the prince?

"Please," he said, "can I take something to you? You are look for somesing—no?"

"Oh, you are so kind!" said she. "I am waiting for my aunt. I thought you had left the steamer at Yalta."

"And you, too, I thought," said he. "I see you not somewhere ever since. But, no, it is that we are both here again—what?"

"The sick gentleman who was with you," she continued, "he is still on the ship? Yes? I heard it said that he was a prince."

"Please," said he, apologetically, "you have heard what is not. He is a pig, please, or somesing wheech is put to wipe off your feet at ze door, but he is a prince not. He is called Colonel Müller."

"A German name," Miss Ethel remarked.

"But, please, Russia is crowded, much, wiz zose German, also zose French names, though not all belong to pigs."

"You, also, have a German name?"

"Please, I have a German name not. My name has much ugliness in English. You will hear it—what? It is Gola—George Theodorus Gola."

She admired his modesty, and still she wanted to hear from his own lips the delicious fact that she was hobnobbing with a prince.

"And I may tell your name—no?"

She told him hers, and added: "Yours is a Georgian name, isn't it?"

"Ah, you know it?" he said. "It was much great, once, for hundreds years—what? But ze Russians swallowed all up the power, and zose wolfs and foxes—zose Armenian—zey swallow all up ze money. So now ze name only is remaining."

There is no need to inflict his broken speech upon the reader any longer. It is easier to imagine it. They talked for several minutes before Mrs. Barrowe came on deck dressed to go ashore. Miss Ethel sought to interest the prince in what she knew of the hot, yellow city that fringed the distant shore and rose to a point on the side of a hill where a beautiful Greek temple—quite modern—formed the point of the pyramid. She told him that two thousand years ago it used to be Panticapæum, the capital of Bosporia, and that it afterwards became Genoese, and then Turkish; but she saw that he did not care. She found it equally idle to describe to him the temples the Greeks built on Mithridates's hill, or the tombs of their kings, or the quantities of relics dug up there—the best of which are in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The prince seemed to know only the modern Greeks, and they, he said, were pigs.

The prince condescended to accompany the ladies ashore, and all three drove over the semi-Oriental town, finding the hill-top view, the open-air market, where the goods are littered all over a cobbled plaza, the museum of Greek relics, and the thirteen-hundred-and-twenty-two-year-old church well worth the journey.

It was twenty-four hours later that the Geor-

A GEORGIAN VILLAGE NEAR BATOUM

gian noble and Miss Ethel met for long enough to enjoy a tête-à-tête. Then he found her alone on the deck late in the evening. It may as well be confessed that the young lady had waited all day for the meeting, and being disappointed, had drawn upon a new instalment of patience and waited far into the night. It would not be polite to estimate how often she murmured to herself the words "Prince Gola," finding them melodious, and liking to make them familiar. When he came it was evident that he did not seek her; in fact, he seemed bent on retreating after wishing her "good-evening"; but she talked on and on, and at last interested him. Therefore, he sat down and spent an hour with her. It was a veiled reference to her aunt's wealth which proved him a far more sympathetic companion than he had seemed when she baited her hook with classical lore, largely from Murray's Guide to Russia. She had not intended to speak of her aunt's means, and perhaps does not know to this day how much upon that subject the prince managed deftly to draw from her. Nevertheless, by a question now and then, veiled by an air of merely formal politeness, he got at the fact that the old lady was very rich, and that his companion was the only person the rich old widow cared for in the world. With

this knowledge gained, the prince went to bed heavy of heart, as one who has scarcely a penny might read of mountains of gold in the moon. On the other hand, the young lady went to her state-room humming a tune so thoughtlessly loud that Mrs. Barrowe was awakened, and gently chid her.

The next sight of Prince Gola that the American ladies had was only a glimpse of him as he boarded the train at Batoum, at the other end from that at which the ladies found that their own wraps and rugs and bags had been put by their porters. The guide-books assert that Batoum prides itself on possessing an avenue of palms that is quite unique, but as the swamp-encircled place is given over to dreadful fevers, the ladies hurried through it, seeing nothing in its whole length except broad streets, made to look desolate by the low and shabby houses at the sides. They breakfasted at the station, where a young woman smoked cigarettes while she sold the railway tickets and made change; and then they took seats in a car that smelled of kerosene, not knowing that nearly everything on the long route across the Caucasian isthmus likewise smells of kerosene, the railway being the medium for carrying the oil from the wells at Baku to the ships at Batoum. Everywhere they saw oil-trains and oil-cars, always distinguished by the

MINGRELIAN WOMEN—"THE PEOPLE WE SPRANG FROM ARE STILL THE MOST BEAUTIFUL"

great boiler-like cylinders which are so familiar in our country. At every station the air was heavy and strong with the aroma of the petroleum that saturated the cars and dripped along the roadway, but by-and-by the smell ceased to be unbearable, though it never quite got to be pleasant. From the car windows, while skirting the sea for thirty miles, they saw its blue expanse on one side and the Caucasus Mountains towering faintly blue on the other. They saw the beginning of Russia's experiment in tea-growing, and noted the houses of the inhabitants of the marshes, that rose like the lake dwellings of old upon four stilts at the corners. They passed mile after mile of plantations of American corn, and marvelled that they had never known, when too used to it at home, that it is the most picturesque, graceful, and beautiful vegetable anywhere cultivated by man. They saw fine galleried houses in ample parks, and sometimes noticed near a village a rude tower or fortress of stone, or else the ruins of one, that had apparently been the citadel and refuge of the villagers. But though their usefulness has gone with the petty wars of barbaric kingdoms and petty princes, the warlike spirit is still quick, as the travellers saw in the rude faces of the men with their sharp noses and flashing eyes, and in

the fact that every man was armed always with a very long broad dagger, carried in front of the narrow shapely waist of his long Circassian coat. Their caps of fur, a modification of the fez, and their pointed shoes or boots, quite as surely linked them with the rest of Asia's swarms.

Miss Ethel had read (and Prince Gola had told her the same thing) that the Mingrelians include the handsomest men and most beautiful women it is possible to imagine, and early in the journey she startled her aunt out of a precious day-dream by exclaiming: "Look there! oh, do look at that woman! Look what a number of handsome people are on that platform! They are Mingrelians, I am sure. Do look at that woman!"

"That peasant in the cotton! Oh, but she is more than beautiful!" said Mrs. Barrowe.

In truth she was more than beautiful, for her carriage was that of a queen. Olive-skinned, soft-eyed, with brown orbs, and long black lashes, with heavy, beautifully curved black eyebrows, and a mass of glossy hair of the same deep tone, with full red lips beautifully bowed, and with a nose curved like an eagle's beak and flared like a lily's mouth at the end, this poor peasant, in a cotton gown and heavy boots, walked up and down the platform with all of what we are

"A TALL, GRAY-BEARDED MOUNTAINEER"

too apt to call the grace and dignity of a queen. "Of a Sioux chief," would be more apt, for not all queens possess the charm of movement that comes with splendid health, or the haughty upholding of the head that is a sign of fearless pride as well as power. As the travellers looked beyond her, the whole crowd on the platform interested them; particularly a tall, gray-bearded mountaineer, as slender and supple as a deer, whose features were artistically perfect, who yet had the eagle face of the first of the Cæsars—the intense small eyes, the hawk nose, the thin firm lips; and again, in a youth in a dirty sheepskin coat and legs bundled in flannel, whose noble head was clothed with a superb shock of curling nut-brown hair, whose blue eyes were as soft as a maiden's, and whose entire face was classic, like a marble god's. The long daggers the men carried were in ornate sheaths of silver arabesqued with enamel, and with handles of the same fashion. They were very picturesque at a railway station in broad daylight, but, Miss Ethel thought, meeting them at night must be a thing dreadful beyond words.

"We should be proud to know that in the birthplace of our race the people we sprang from are still the most beautiful," she said.

"What is all this?" the elder lady asked, quick-

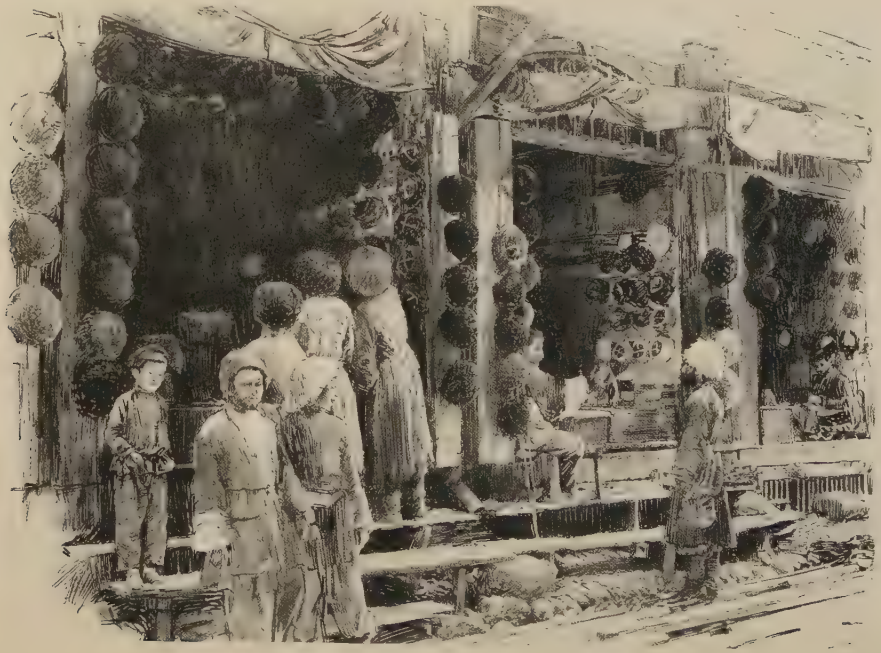
ly but good-humoredly. "I never heard a sound of Mingrelia before. Where and why have you picked it all up? Is HE Mingrelian?"

"Yes, dear aunt," in a purr, like a kitten.

"Humph!" her aunt exclaimed. "He escaped the contagion of beauty, didn't he?"

Baku is the source of the gigantic smell of kerosene that floats across the isthmus as if the purpose of the railway was to distribute it along with the oil. Here the old lady met those Armenian philanthropists who so heroically received all the money they could get from her. It was a stupid place to Miss Ethel. If she had ever seen the Pennsylvania oil district, she would have liked a day here just to note how American methods have been copied to make one region almost like the other; but she had not, and time hung as heavy as the oil-drenched air around her. At last Mrs. Barrowe had seen all her correspondents, and was beginning the purely pleasure part of her trip at Tiflis.

It is the most Asiatic town on Europe's borders, one of the quaintest, gaudiest, most splendidly situated of all cities, the lodge at the gate of the Caucasus, the capital of Russian power in the Near East. Its nineteenth-century museum and its crumbling old citadel contrast no more strongly



THE TINY SHOPS OF THE PERSIAN QUARTER, TIFLIS

than its dandies and its barbaric chiefs, its Parisian and its Persian shops, its diligences and sleeping-cars, its opera troupe and the dagger-carrying minstrels who sing in its streets. What a dreamy, unreal congerie of alleys, and swarm of quaint costumes, and kaleidoscope of Asiatic life, is the Persian quarter! The tiny shops all seemed to be disgorging their wares on the crooked, cobbled streets. Each was a cave in which our ladies saw workmen making the very articles they bought — the enamelled daggers, bracelets, pins, and boxes, the inlaid fiddles and mandolins, and a wide range of things of iron and steel and silver and copper. They were jostled by poor men shouldering their dead in coffins; they saw bakers hooking fresh-baked loaves out of sunken ovens, and hanging their sheets of bread on strings in the doorways; merchants sucked hubble-bubbles in the street; and Persian chiefs and Greek peddlers sat cross-legged together in the tea-shops. Fancy two American ladies with time and money, with a whole street of silversmiths before them, or exploring carpet-shops hung with rugs as gorgeous as the banners in a Lord Mayor's show! At times they came to a bridge over the savage-rushing Kur, and saw how it had cut its course deep down through solid rock, making steep pali-

sades for shores, on top of which were dizzily perched temples, shops, gardens, and hive-like houses, whose galleries hung over the turbulent river—a crack in the bottom of the bowl around all sides of which Tiflis is built, and on one side of which, like a handle on the rim, is the ancient citadel.

They knew the prince was in Tiflis, but they were there several days before they met him. One evening, when they had gone to the splendid ultra-modern opera-house, with its soft colors touched with gold, its four rectangular galleries, and its seats arranged, below the boxes, to make a floral bank of the beauties of Europe and Asia, Miss Ethel and her aunt were in the gaudy foyer when the square, ruddy head of the prince appeared in the doorway of the smoking and bar room at the foyer's farther side. He saw them at the same instant. He had a napkin in his hand, and this he instantly dropped as he made his way through the crowd to the ladies. He showed an interest in them at last.

"Why!" exclaimed the younger lady, "you are the only gentleman in evening dress in the whole opera-house. I like it. I have not felt as if I was at the opera, because only the ladies are properly dressed."

TIFLIS—"THE SAVAGE-RUSHING KUR"

"Please," said the prince, "most of the men are in uniforms which they must wear, and which are therefore as proper as a dress-coat and waistcoat."

"How many soldiers there are all over Russia!" said she.

"Please, few here are soldiers," said the prince, surveying the swarm of men in blue and gold. "Those two are civil engineers: see the hammers crossed on their shoulders. Those three, and all the others in that simple, severe dress of blue with silver buttons, are students. There is a professor, and there a doctor, and that man in white silk with gold ornaments talking to the man in blue is what you call a sheriff. The other is an architect. So, instead of soldiers, here are judges, teachers, lawyers, railway men—for all professional people, all officials, and all government employés must wear their especial uniforms."

Two young army officers strode by, both swarthy and raven-haired, and as handsome as if Adonis had a twin brother and both had come to earth to serve the Czar. One was all in white, with a row of ornately carved silver powder-cylinders looped across his broad breast and with a silver dagger and sword. The other wore rich brown and powder-tubes and arms of graven gold. Their

hats were tall caps of baby lamb-skin, matching their costumes; their coats were moulded at the waists almost like those of French exquisites; their boots were of Russian leather. They were the most superb masculine figures Miss Ethel had ever seen—two young nobles, officers of Circassian regiments.

"Oh, you dear old Tiflis, how I love you!" she exclaimed. "What a gorgeous assembly this is! Do you know, I cannot believe such a thing could happen anywhere else in the world as happened here to-night. There was the stage, with the King, and Aïda and her companion, and the hero coming in a glory of color and shining mail, and all the brilliant Oriental costumes of a hundred men and women of Egypt of old, and I turned and looked behind me and saw the same thing—as if the stage was a mirror reflecting the audience—the same swarthy faces, the same shining side-arms, the same olive-toned women, the gaudy colors of velvets and soft silks. The actors were imitating the spectators. Oh, it was wonderful! But Tiflis is all so. I pinch myself now and again to be sure I am awake."

"That gentleman can't get his overcoat on," said Mrs. Barrowe to the prince. "Why don't you help him?"

A MERCHANT IN THE PERSIAN QUARTER, TIFLIS

"Please," said the tall, ruddy nobleman, and instantly stepped behind the man and assisted him on with the coat, putting a hand under it at the right moment to pull the undercoat down while he adjusted the top one.

"Aunt! aunt!" Miss Ethel wailed, under her breath. "What possessed you?"

"Eh?" Mrs. Barrowe replied. "The man could not get his coat on. But—h's'h—"

The prince returned, smiling, and as the stage-bell rang at the moment, he escorted the ladies to their box. Mrs. Barrowe went ahead, and there was time for him to propose a drive all round Tiflis for the next afternoon, an offer that the young lady said she was sure her aunt would accept.

"My handkerchief is on the floor; pick it up, please," Mrs. Barrowe said to the prince. There was in her manner and tone something very close to intentional offending, and her niece's heart went cold and heavy with indignation and alarm, but the prince, with the awkwardness that was his by birth, picked up the trifle and smiled, and said "please" as he handed it to the old lady.

"We will not mind a ride around the town," she said, coldly; "but mind, if you say three o'clock, come at three, or we shall have gone."

The prince withdrew, bowing.

"Aunty, aunty, I never knew you to act so—or to speak to any one as you do to him."

"I never did," said her aunt. "He seems to call it out. He's your prince, Ethel, dear; not mine. By-the-way, I have asked about him of one of the consuls here, and he really is a prince, of a very old family, as you heard. That is part of what I heard against him. It shouldn't be against him, but, as princes go, it is. He is very poor, which is not always a fault. He and his sister were left a little property, and she has hers yet. His burned his pockets and he got rid of it. That's all the ill I know of him—and all the good, as well."

While the two women talked, the prince was meeting what he considered a crisis in his life. He was transformed. Instead of the lifeless, mechanically apologetic being he had appeared, behold him now, with eyes brightened by excitement, pushing men and women out of his way, and darting about the foyer, the smoking and the dressing rooms, in search of some one. He stops at the smoking-room bar, and says something to the manager, who is displeased, and replies that it shall not be. "Damn!" says the prince; "it's got to be. I cannot waste time here; I have more im-

A CAUCASIAN ARMENIAN IN NATIONAL COSTUME

portant affairs." He rushes about again and finds the object of his search — the testy, sick colonel with whom he travelled on the ship.

"I have met that American millionairess and the niece," he says. "They are here—at the Hôtel d'Orient—I saw by her face that she can easily—that I—oh, damn! do you not understand?—she loves me. Now, please, I want five hundred roubles. I take her to see the town to-morrow. Will you lend me so much?"

"Five hundred cats and dogs!" the colonel yells. "Why, you are mad. I have taken my whole staff, not to see Tiflis, but to see Paris—Paris—and done the whole place, wine, the dancers at the Mabille, supper, till daylight, for half that sum."

"Quick! there is no time," says the prince. "She stays only a week, and I must be free, with ready money. I can marry her, I tell you. I will pay you two for one."

"I have not got it," says the colonel. "Besides, I do not gamble so much at one play. I will pay you the fifteen roubles I owe you at ten to-morrow."

"Please, I will give three roubles for one."

"No; that is positive. Come at ten for your pay."

"Very well, at that hour I will show you the five hundred roubles."

"Where will you get them?" the colonel asks. The familiarity of Russians with one another, even between servants and masters, is surprising.

"From my sister," says the prince.

"You scoundrel—you will ruin her," says the colonel.

"She shall be rich. I will pay her five for one," the prince replies, and is off.

The next day, when he was with the ladies, he was so merry as to suggest the thought that he had been drinking. His clothes were as shabby as ever, but in another twenty-four hours he shone with new broadcloth from top to toe, and on his fingers were several rings, one bearing the crest of his family, while a chain, curiously like a lady's, and with a lady's little watch at the end, enhanced the effect of his new prosperity. "These things," he said to Miss Ethel, when she was examining his rude yet very curious seal-ring, "I usually leave with my sister, who keeps them safely." He proved an assiduous and resourceful friend, and was with the ladies every day—and nearly all of each day. His hand was ever drawing small change from his pockets, and money seemed plentiful with him. He took them to the

A GEORGIAN MOTHER

Russian churches, to the mosque and the Turkish baths, to the botanical gardens, the military museum — everything, in Tiflis. Once he suggested that the finest thing in Tiflis—he had heard that it was the finest sight of its kind in the world—was a view of Tiflis after dark from any point on the rim of the bowl that holds it. It was agreed that next day they would drive later than usual and see this spectacle.

"I shall not go with you," Mrs. Barrowe said. "I will be driven to the hotel, and leave you to go on. Oh yes, it will be perfectly proper if M. Gola does not misunderstand it, and you can set him right if he does. With an open carriage and a familiar Russian driver, who sits with his back to the team and talks to you all the while—oh, it will be quite right. At all events, I don't care so much for the lights as I do for—for having you see all you can of M. Gola before we leave him here."

So it fell out that the prince, the maiden, and the ever-familiar isvostchik left Mrs. Barrowe at her door, and went across the Kur and up through the Georgian village to the summit of the hill behind it. The prince essayed a little tenderness, then grew bolder, and fondled Miss Ethel's hand as it lay in her lap. She told herself that he was

in love with her, and marvelled to find that she could easily divide and analyze her own feelings, made up of admiration of his title and uncertainty about himself. She was too modest to realize how sensible a girl she was. When the carriage had climbed far past the sparse lights in the last houses she grew nervous. The growing tenderness of the prince, the lonely road, the darkness, her knowledge of the fierce, armed people—let these excuse her.

"We have gone far enough, monsieur," she said. "We will stop here. How do you say that in Russian?"

"Me estaniem zdeas," said he.

"Me estaniem zdeas," she repeated; "we will stop here." The landau turned right about so that they could look down into the great well of lights. She stared like one enchanted. The prince slipped her unbuttoned glove half down her hand. She seemed oblivious of what he did. He raised her hand and would have kissed it.

"Don't be silly," she said. "There I do draw the line. But see," she added, "how that huge black disk is flecked, dotted, sprinkled—oh, I know the exact word — spangled with yellow jets. I have watched this spectacle from my window every night, but I never saw it all before. How

full of loose patterns and figures it is! It is like looking down instead of up at the heavens, only that there are clearer, bigger lights — and they really look as numberless. There goes the Milky Way, and there are innumerable new constellations. And oh, see, there is even a shooting-star!"

"Please, eet ees one droschka, perhaps, going down ze hill."

"Yes, yes," with impatience—"if you will be practical. Let me have my hand now. But oh, see where the real heavens bend down to meet this artificial sky! See the dark rim between the two, and then star matching jet, and mass matching mass! I did not know I could be glad that kerosene existed."

That was the last time they were together in Tiflis, except for a moment next day to say goodbye, for Mrs. Barrowe suddenly announced that they must return to Baku. Her niece felt certain the change of plan was made to affect the prince and herself, but how or why she did not understand. "We shall see you again, M. Gola, in Vladi-Kavkas in four or five weeks," said Mrs. Barrowe. The prince looked very unhappy. He had volunteered to accompany the ladies, but Mrs. Barrowe discouraged him.

"If your prince was an American or an Eng-

lishman," said she, when they were by themselves in the diligence, "he would not have risked a refusal. He would have come—he would have appeared beside us."

"You don't like him any better," said Miss Ethel.

"No, but I like him just as much," the old lady said, grimly. "Dear me, I meant to tell him to take off my shoes and put on my fur-lined boots, but I forgot it."

"You are worse than rude to him," said her niece. "You would not act so if you knew how it hurts me to see you make such a false impression of your character."

"I wonder he stands it," the old lady said, musingly; "but he does, my dear, doesn't he?"

M. Gola went at once to Vladi-Kavkas, where he had long made his home, and with equal precipitation took up the life he had been accustomed to lead there—a course he would not have pursued for all that he ever possessed had he not anticipated a month or more of separation from the American ladies. He relied, also, upon word from Miss Ethel in advance of their coming. And, more than all else, he counted upon the fact that in Russia few persons whom tourists meet are able to speak English, and these do not know the

A STATION ON THE MILITARY WAY

gossip of Russian circles. I am not suggesting that the prince had a "bad past" to conceal. It was not his past that urged secrecy.

The Barrowes had not been in Baku more than two days, or away from Tiflis more than five, when the elder lady said: "Now let's post straight over the Caucasus, and home. Please do not telegraph or write M. Gola of our coming. I wish him to surprise us."

"We are to surprise him, you mean," said Miss Ethel.

"Oh, do I?" her aunt replied. "Well, have it as you like, dear."

They travelled in an omnibus-diligence, which looked like a buggy and a cab combined. It had a great hood in front of the coach body, with seats in front by the driver, seats inside, and baggage top and back. The horses were changed several times a day, and each day there were three or more stops for meals. The journey used up all the daylight hours of two days, and was over a well-made macadam road, set at convenient distances with station buildings which were complete hotels. The first day's ride was among soft, round mountains, grassy to the tops, and everywhere dotted with picturesque cabins and villages, whose people farmed the best ground and used

the rest for pasturage. Late at night the last stop was at a hotel, where the ladies tried to sleep in a bare, untidy room, without a lock on the door, while the mountain folk increased their nervousness by beating a barbaric drum to weird, shrill music. There is no real danger on this well-guarded, military way, but the house was lonely, the noise uncanny, and the ladies were unduly impressed by the fact that the people were armed. The second day's stages began at daybreak, through scenery fine as any in the Alps. The mountains became enormous, lifting huge castellated crags of bare rock above their vegetation, though in the main they were still clothed, at least in places, to the tops. They had been populated for centuries, and each village had its crumbling tower of refuge. The peasants were seen cutting grass at such heights that they appeared the size of flies. The diligence rolled at great speed downward, at last, for hours, in towering canyons, beside steep precipices, and above a brawling river. Finally the valley widened and widened—into Europe.

It was night when the diligence drove into the posting-yard at Vladi-Kavkas, then, in 1877, the wickedest little city in Europe, where the arms every man wore were often utilized in highwaymanry and in murder. The ladies drove to the

"OVER THE CAUCASUS, AND HOME"

Hôtel Elbruz, of which it was said that it was no dirtier or more untidy than every other hotel there. Arrived and dinner ordered, Mrs. Barrowe took her niece by the shoulders, and, with kindly mischief in her eyes, pushed her against the door, saying, "Now, you little title-smitten republican, we are in the same house with your prince, and I want to know—are you sober, or are you insane?"

"Sober, I hope, aunty."

"Do you love that lion-colored shadow of a wrecked nobility?"

"No, aunty; I don't—love—him."

"For that answer you shall have a pearl necklace when we get to Paris. You would love him if you found him really noble, and proud, and clean, and ambitious, and independent—what a silly girl always conjures up when she thinks of a prince—you would, wouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid I might, dear aunt; but what is—"

"H's'h! You would, of course. I'll give you nothing for that, because it had to be so. But now if you found him unambitious, servile, humbling himself and disgracing his race for a pittance, content with his humility, reduced to it by laziness and by worse, for every rouble he has spent in our company is, I find, the money of his sister, whose tiny portion he is rapidly squandering (oh,

I'll see that she does not suffer, never fear)—squandering as he first squandered—"

"Oh, aunt, are you sure of all this?"

"It's here in black and white, twice—from my lawyer in Baku, and again from an official in Tiflis. If it is true, you will be convinced of it by the prince himself here to-night, according to these letters, which I have received within a week. But, as I was saying, if your prince is without pride, without ambition, without self-respect, or an independent spirit, you will never love him for the title he disgraces?"

"Not if he were the Czar," said the girl, firmly.

"For that, when we get to Paris, you shall have—"

"Dear aunt, this is not a thing to joke about. I will have nothing from you in Paris. I mean it; you need not offer me anything. The idea—that—that you should—should think"—and here, after the kindly, shrewd old lady has pulled the sentimental young one on her knee and is pressing two wet eyes against her breast, we will shut the door and intrude no further. As we do so, we may not help hearing the elder woman say:

"He is only shiftless, and though he is not fit for you, truly, Ethel, he is a better man than many

"HE RECOGNIZED THEM WHEN TEN FEET AWAY"

so-called noblemen at whose heads our silly countrywomen have flung themselves."

Thirty minutes later the ladies descended to the dining-room. Miss Ethel led the way, and the first person she saw was the prince, with one side towards her, with a soiled napkin on one arm, smoothing down a man's overcoat with one hand, and holding the other out to receive the kopecks the man was bestowing as a tip. She walked to a table, and she and her aunt were seated before the prince moved towards them. He recognized them when ten feet away, and tried to fling his napkin into a chair without their seeing the act. He came bowing and scraping up to them, and the younger lady watched the elder one for her cue. Mrs. Barrowe rose and greeted him quite in the old way, and her niece did the same.

"And now that we have met you again," said Mrs. Barrowe, "pick up your napkin, and—wait one second—get us two plates of borsch, broiled chicken and cauliflower for two, a pint of Bessarabian claret, and a bottle of Borgom water. Oh yes, and whatever sweets you have also."

The prince's face was scarlet to his hair. He said that another man would serve them, and Mrs. Barrowe replied that "it might be pleasanter." Miss Ethel could scarcely pretend to eat,

and sat in agony, while her aunt placidly made her way through a hearty meal. The prince disappeared, but when both were leaving the room he came and detained the younger lady, and with something like real passion in his voice asked, "Cannot this be forgiven?"

"Not in a gentleman," said Mrs. Barrowe, over one shoulder.

"May I not make myself known to you in a better way?" he pleaded. "I can prove that my family—"

"Me estaniem zdeas," Miss Ethel said. "You taught me that. You know what it means. It is better so."

WHEN THE CLOUDS FELL DOWN

THE two most unhappy young persons in London, one November day, were hurrying towards happiness without knowing it—towards united happiness, without one suspecting that the other was on the same hemisphere; towards joy, which could only be attained by the quickest, hardest work, in the face of great difficulty, and by the help of what we call "all the chances"—nearly every one of which happened to be against them.

Helen Woolland was walking down the street called St. Mary Abbott's Terrace, in Kensington, with her face towards Knightsbridge. She was moving very slowly, and so nearly aimlessly, at first, that a very little thing might have turned her steps in quite another direction—the sight of a former schoolmate or servant, for instance.

This was because her face was swollen and a trifle purple about the eyes from crying, and because her brain felt numb and her spirit limp from

the intense and prolonged excitement under which she had labored. You never would have guessed how pretty a girl—she was eighteen—she had been a week before, or would be a day hence.

"Mr. Staple will be there to-night," she said, talking to herself, as we do, without speaking. "If I should marry him, I should not have to go to Aunt Hannah's in Australia. By the terms of the will I could live here; but I would rather die than marry him, and I would rather die than go to my aunt's. Die? Is there anything else left for me? Was ever girl so miserable?"

A little farther along the street she asked herself where she was walking, and why. She had believed that but five hours of liberty remained to her in this life—before the reading of her father's will made her a captive to her aunt, that odious will, whose contents she knew too well. "I must have air," she had said to Miss Jollitt at the boarding-school where she had ceased to be a pupil but remained as a boarder. "I must be out in the air, and I must walk at least four of my last five hours." Miss Jollitt had said, "Promise not to do anything rash; to come back; not to run away." And Helen had replied, "Dear Miss Jollitt, I am too cowardly to kill myself, and there is nowhere to run to, so I must come back."

Nevertheless, she half suspected that the walk might turn into running away, never to come back —as, indeed, it proved in the end. But whichever it should be, she determined that, walking or running away, she would go Piccadilly way, just to have a last look at the old shops, from one to another of which she had so often dawdled with Harry Ledyard in the happy days when her heart swelled with merely being by his side, and when, in its innermost recesses, she regarded him as her beau, as all the girls did, as everybody did, except Harry himself.

And now it was four and a half hours from eight o'clock, when the reading of the will would take place, and it would be declared that, being unmarried, she must accept as her guardian her uncle and aunt, and as her home theirs in Sydney. Mr. Staple, brother to her aunt's first husband, and the idol of the old lady's life, would attend the reading, and would take her and her aunt to Australia. He would press his tireless suit for her hand during every day of that long voyage. She never would yield—not she. Yet the hateful journey would leave her no better off at its end. There, in Sydney, the stiff, forbidding, repellent home of her only relative, Aunt Hannah, would be her living tomb. That cold, stern, unsympathetic old

lady would once again order her young life into the same narrow, icy channels into which she had forced it in London years ago, before kindly fate had sent her aunt to Australia and herself to Miss Jollitt's school.

"Oh," she wailed, almost aloud, "in what corner of the earth is Harry? He did not care even a little for me—and I love him yet, oh, so much! Is he engaged, or—married, or—dead?" Alas! he had vanished, as she might by a mere spring from Battersea Bridge. And why should she not? But in the mean time she would once more walk past the shops in Knightsbridge before which she and Harry had taken every one of the few walks they had enjoyed together, as boy and girl, six or seven years ago. A bit of one of his caps—a square of blue flannel with the cross of his school worked on it in silver thread—was in her purse at that moment.

"I'd feel some little comfort if I pinned it to my dress again, as I did when he gave it to me," she thought; and with the thought she pinned the little blue square to her dress before her heart.

The weather was such as could only be enjoyed by the English, who love nature in its every guise, and the open air always, no matter what its quality. The day was of the worst kind that comes in

November—London's worst month. A fog of the color of weak chocolate and milk hung before every window, every eye. The people within-doors groped in smoky air, as if their houses were afire. In the shops the gas-jets, already lit, seemed to light only themselves, as diamonds do. The 'buses, carts, and people in the streets, at fifty feet away, were enlarged and spectral, like the spirits or the shadows of themselves, exaggerated. The still air was chilly and penetrating, and sulphurous. If London's millions had been Americans newly arrived, not one could have kept his teeth from chattering, except those who were bakers at work or soldiers swaddled and on parade. But the English keep warm by exercise, and by the method the Chinese have of heaping on thick clothing. Of Americans we have none to deal with, though Harry Ledyard had arrived on that day from New York.

As we come to consider Mr. Ledyard and Miss Woolland we shall gradually form the opinion that the clouds that were dragged down by their load of soft-coal smoke, and were pressing upon the houses, parks, and streets, were also imprisoning all the sprites of the upper air. We shall begin soon to fancy that, as they could not rise or escape, they turned and vented their spite, their mischief,

and their benefactions upon humankind according to their elfish natures rather than the deserts of their victims.

Harry Ledyard had been a sheep-raiser in Montana, having gone into that pursuit blindly, as so many young Englishmen plunge into financial ruin in our West, but with better fortune than most of them. When he began the work it was the fashion to ridicule "sheep-men," but it chanced that just then another fashion came in—that of eating mutton—and another—that of exporting mutton. At the last he had found civilization cramping the free ranges, and had come out of Montana with an amount of wealth such as few men in the once luckier pursuits of raising horses and steers had recently amassed. He had landed only that morning, and, stopping at the office of his lawyer, had listened to the gossip of a clerk, who told him the news that the sweetheart of his boyhood was now rich in her own right, made so by the death of her father. "But the will declared," said this gossip, "that her father's town and country houses were to be rented for her advantage unless she was married when the will was read, and, if she was unmarried, her aunt in Australia was to be her guardian until such time as she should marry and return to England."

"Ah, hum!" said the clerk. "They say that she has vowed she will never go to her aunt, whom she detests, and as her aunt's favorite, young Mr. Staple, was at once telegraphed for and is in love with her, they are probably married by this time, and she is enjoying life in London."

It did not become Mr. Ledyard to gossip with the clerk or to repose confidences in him. He was so much troubled by what he had been told, however, that he set out to expend his excitement by physical exercise, and so he also was walking as Miss Helen was doing. And he was walking towards her, bound for the same row of shops in Knightsbridge which had been the objective point of the strolls he and she had taken years before—the great shopping-stores at Sloane Street for her delight, the curio and silver shops for the delectation of both. Every day since those walks he had treasured them in his memory, and so, we know, had she. But neither suspected this of the other.

"Heavens! how I did love her—and do!" he said to himself. "But she cannot have cared much for me, or why did she leave my letter unanswered? When I used to visit Aunt Jollitt, where Helen went to school, the plot which has now culminated was being deliberately planned. It is all plain to see now. Staple and I were both

frequent callers there, but the field was left to him, and I was sent away because aunt said she had been warned by Helen's people that if anything came of our acquaintance it would appear that she had manipulated the match by unfair means, and her school would lose its place in the good-will of its patrons. She scented financial ruin, and I broke off my visits and went to America. Had Helen's father been in London, instead of living, God knows how or why, on a hunting-trip ten years prolonged, in Central Asia, I should have gone to him and begged his sanction of a formal suit for Helen's hand. I never dreamed that Staple would succeed. Helen was always cold to him, and vowed she had a repugnance for him. And so now she is his bride! Poor girl! she must have been driven to take the step. And I, who came hoping what seemed the most reasonable, as they certainly were the sweetest hopes, am stunned and dazed, and my heart has turned to marble."

He was so completely oblivious of his surroundings that had the wooden roadway of Piccadilly turned into a trail, and the Albert Gate Mansions before him suddenly become a Montana mountain-peak, he would not have been surprised; indeed, I doubt if he would have noticed it.

The blind elf Hazard was guiding his steps and hers towards the good fortune of a meeting, but a less amiable imp, called Misrule, had laid a finger on the foreheads and lips of both of them, as we shall see.

Ledyard came to the queer little shop at the point of the wedge of buildings which force themselves between a part of Hyde Park and Piccadilly —a shop of the size of a hall bedroom, occupied by a dealer in antique china and glass. Everybody knows the place, with its single little window always full of constantly changing treasures in bric-à-brac. Here the old-time strolls of Helen and Harry had always ended. Harry almost unconsciously stopped and turned to face the window, seeing nothing at first, but gradually realizing that this was indeed a landmark in his dream of love. A tall, slender young woman in black was there before him, looking at an image of Mr. and Mrs. Caudle in their porcelain bed, at a riveted Nanking dish, a cracked bowl of singsong ware, and all the rest. She had seen all she wished, and stepped back to turn and walk away, but one of her heels fell with considerable force directly upon one of Ledyard's boots. Swiftly then she turned to beg his pardon. Her words caught fast between her lips, and she looked again at him, so

searchingly that he now stared at her. All he saw was a very tall young blonde, straight as an arrow and with a strange blending of girlishness and womanliness, of departing diffidence and new budding gravity, in her oval face, with its skin, that was like polished ivory, reflecting the hue of light-red roses. He did not afterwards remember to have noticed how swollen were the lids of her tender blue eyes.

"Harry!—Mr.—" she exclaimed.

"Miss!—Mrs.!—Helen! is it you?" he almost shouted.

She put out a hand, then both hands, and tottered forward, falling in a dead swoon in his arms.

It was more than half an hour later—it was after half past four o'clock—when, revived by the joint exertions of Harry and the shopman, she rose unsteadily from the chair in the little shop of the curio-dealer, and they walked together, arm in arm, into Hyde Park. Strength came quickly with the strain of her new and joyous excitement, and they walked on and on to Kensington Gardens, and to a bench under the great trees in an almost deserted corner of the old royal park. The badge of Henry's school-days was on her left side—the side farthest from him—where the

IN THE CURIO-DEALER'S SHOP

edge of her jacket half hid it so that he had not noticed it.

They had talked of her father's death, and now he was answering her eager questions about himself and his experiences in the American West. They were losing time, precious time, and there was not a second to spare. But how were they to know that?

"Your aunt came to England. Is she still here?"

"Yes; she came to attend the reading of father's will. She was advised that it would be necessary."

"And Mr. Staple. Was not he the brother of her first husband?"

"He is."

"I beg pardon; *is*, of course. Will he live in London, I was going to ask?"

"Nothing is yet settled," Helen replied; "but I suppose it will be as before—half the time here and half the time with aunt."

"Helen, you have been crying."

"I have been very unhappy."

"Unhappy? Good heavens! How?" But he stopped himself, for he remembered he had no right to ask a married woman why she was unhappy, or even to hear why, if, as he suspected, her marriage made her so.

"Unhappy is a weak word for what I have been till this great pleasure of meeting so old and precious a friend befell me. And I shall be as miserable again to-morrow. But let us not talk of my little troubles."

"I am dreadfully sorry," said he.

There was a pause, and the perverse moments sped.

"May I talk of my one great trouble?—for it has been a great one, Helen—forgive me for calling you so. I mean—"

"Oh, do call me so! Don't deny me the least bit of this magical revival of the sweet past," said she. "That would be cruel indeed. I shall call you Harry while I live, if I may."

"God bless you!—I mean, I thank you so much," said he. "I was going to speak of my single yet very great trouble. Why have I never heard from you in all these years? Why did you let me leave England without a word?"

"Oh, how can you ask that?" she exclaimed. "How could I write to you, or even send you a word?"

"And why not?"

The moments kept swelling to minutes, and flying away.

"After the way you broke with me—without even a good-bye."

"I was boyish, foolish; I could not trust myself to speak the word farewell. I feared to do so lest more than 'good-bye' might follow; I was so fond of you—may I say that, now that all is over?"

At these three last words Helen's heart stopped beating, and she feared it would never beat again, at the same time dreading the thought that perhaps it might return to its work, for whether "all is over" meant that he was married, or only that he was cured of his love by time, what did it matter, so long as the fact remained?

"I do not understand you," said she, hoping for light upon his words.

"It was as I wrote you," said Ledyard. "Aunt Jollitt had been warned by your uncle, or step-uncle, that if my visits had any serious consequences it might be said that the dear old lady used her school to make matches for her relatives. She forbade my ever seeing you again while you were at her school; indeed, she exacted a promise that I would not do so."

"You—you—liked me, you say, and yet you could be made to promise to violate common politeness by leaving without even a 'good-bye'—without a word of explanation?"

"A word of explanation?" he exclaimed. And

the minutes sped on and on. "I wrote you eight pages of explanation. Oh, why should we revive such bitter memories, Helen? I ceased calling at the school from a sense of duty and affection towards my aunt, but I wrote you a letter showing you how by a single word, if only 'yes,' or 'wait,' you could hold me—as God knows you have held me—by my heart-strings. I told you the slightest word of encouragement would bind me to you forever. And you did not answer even a word. Staple filled your time and thoughts. Of course it is not for me to blame or criticise you, though why you treated me so is all plain now."

"For shame, Harry! Mr. Staple never saw me once, except for five minutes on two occasions when he was leaving England, and in the presence of your aunt. But I will not defend myself until you have answered me. How did you write, and when? By what means did you send the letter?"

"You never got it, Helen?"

"Oh, Harry, need I swear it? You know I never did. We were but boy and girl; we had not talked of serious things, of our affection, not even lightly; but you were my idol, my hero, and you dare to think I got a farewell letter from you and did not answer it!"

Here she hid her face in her hands and sobbed —while the minutes sped.

"I sent you a fancy pasteboard box of stationery—"

"Yes."

"The letter was in the box."

"Oh, Harry!" she said, excitedly. "I have the box yet. I have kept it exactly as I got it. The ribbons and bow-knots have never been untied. I have looked at it and caressed it a thousand times, but have never even taken out the paper and packets of envelopes. Then the letter must be there yet!"

"For gracious' sake, did you think I would send you all that blank paper and not one sheet of writing? Did you not know the silly box was merely a means of conveying something more important to you?"

"Of course, of course. I see it now, though it never occurred to me before. Of what use were my senses if they could not lead me to that letter?"

"Well, please send it back to me now, when you find it, to the Cadogan Hotel. Can you remember, or shall I write it?"

"Send it to you? Indeed I shall not! Perhaps you will ask me to send you back this badge as well?"

She showed him the bit of his old blue cloth cap, with the school emblem embroidered upon it.

"Helen," said he, puzzled and a trifle scandalized, "you will not send me back a love-letter? And you are wearing that badge? Am I insane—or are you? Does Mr. Staple—"

"Oh, bother Mr. Staple! Why so constantly drag him in? I never dreamed you could be jealous."

"Jealous? Drag Mr. Staple in?" Harry repeated.

"Yes," Helen answered. "What on earth is Mr. Staple to me?"

"Only your husband, I hear."

"My husband!" She stared at him, then burst into the first fit of laughter that had come to her relief in a month. "I believe he is due in London to-night. I am warned that he comes to propose to me. He was expected to reach here yesterday and to marry me last evening, if he could, so that —God forgive me!—so that he could at once enjoy my property, which must certainly be the only thing about me that attracts him. Father's will reads that I was to enter into possession and occupation of the estate at once if I was married at the time the will was read. Dear father, without meaning so, or dreaming of Aunt Hannah's plot

to force me to marry her step-brother — father made a will which gives her complete control of me unless I am married to-day, which I am not. Ah me! I scarcely know whether to say 'alas!' or 'thank Heaven!'"

It was now five o'clock.

"When is the will to be read?" Ledyard asked.

"To-night at eight o'clock, at the house of a connection of my aunt's in Oakley Street, Chelsea."

"Good heavens! What is all this you are telling me?" Ledyard exclaimed. "The will to be read to-night? The aunt with whom you used to be so unhappy now to become your guardian unless you are married—one might say—within the next few minutes? And Staple coming too late to avert this fate?"

"Mr. Staple never could have helped or marred any fate of mine," Helen said, with emphasis, "and you are cruel to pretend to think he ever could."

There was a pause. The moments still were speeding. The heartless elf Hazard had summoned his gentler sister Fortune to his side, and together they had driven off the imp Misrule, though, alas, only for a time. The fog hung lower and more heavily, yet it almost seemed to Helen and Harry as if the sun were shining.

"Why, Helen!" he exclaimed, as the beautiful glow of new hope flooded his understanding.

"What, Harry, dear?" she asked—though she well knew what joyous thoughts possessed him.

"What were you doing out to-day?"

"Enjoying my last few minutes of liberty."

"But at the curio-dealer's window? Why there?"

"Oh, I don't know. What were you doing there?"

"I thought I went there to think of you, but perhaps—perhaps Heaven sent me there."

"I am sure of it," said Helen. "Heaven sent me, I know. Why do you doubt it?"

"I shall be sure of it, Helen, if you say one certain word. Little woman, I have loved you steadily, more and more and more, every day for seven years—as long as Jacob courted Rachel."

"Rachel loved Jacob all that time, didn't she, Harry? Why does no one ever give Rachel a share of credit for the same constancy, I wonder?"

"Helen, kiss me!" he exclaimed; but it was he who kissed her, while she swept the park with a hurried glance to see whether anything more observant than the spectral trees perceived him.

"Now run for your life," said he, "or I shall kiss you a thousand times, publicly, here in this

park. I shall kiss you all away, every inch of you."

"Please, may I keep my boy lover's little school badge?" she asked; "for you may kiss away all but that. But no, you shall do as you please with me always, for all time; so now begin."

"But, Helen, there is not an instant to lose. The license, the clergyman, the witnesses — all must be got ready at once; and the Town Hall closes at— Goodness! it may be closed now! Will you be ready in an hour, dear heart?"

"I don't seem to be consulted at all," Helen pouted. "Your assurance passes all bounds."

"Yes, it does, but there is not time to mind about that now. I must take a hansom to the Town Hall, and then to the church. What do you say to that little chapel just off Earl's Court Road? We went there once, do you remember? Dear me, a man ought to know everything, but how can he know about marriage if he has never done it before? I do not even know how to get a license."

"I do," Helen said. "I went with Kitty Burleigh, who was to wait there for her *fiancé*, and he did not come on time, and they asked her a few questions, and before she knew what they were about they handed her a license all made out. I can do as much as Kitty did."

"But would you like to, darling?"

"Not wholly, but I will do it. We must both hurry. Oh, Harry, if I had not loved you with my whole heart for years, I should love you now. Do you know, I was running away when I met you. Yes, you need not be surprised. At least, I think I was running away. I was so miserable. It seemed to me I must commit suicide, or leave home and start anew somewhere. I was too arrant a coward to kill myself; but don't despise me, for I was too brave to endure the torture of exile and companionship with my aunt. I never meant to hear father's will read."

"Poor, poor Helen! But keep all this till a little later," said Harry. "Here, we will jump in a cab and go together to the Hall, where I will leave you and go on to the chapel. Please be on the steps of the Hall in half an hour. There I will pick you up, and we shall be married an hour before the will is read."

When the minister's servant opened the door of the house to let Harry out, with all his preliminary work quickly done, and nothing left but to join Helen, the dark substance like thick chocolate held in solution in the air pushed its way into the passage as smoke rolls over the ground or

the sea after the discharge of a monster cannon.

"Mercy!" the maid exclaimed. "A black fog has fallen. Whatever will you do?"

It was so indeed. The imp Misrule was again enthroned over Harry's destiny and Helen's. A black fog, the terror peculiar to London winters, and not too frequently seen, else London would be uninhabitable, had stormed and taken the metropolis. It had fallen and gathered in London's millions as a circus tent, losing its supports, might fall and envelop a lesser multitude. As far as the life of London and its famed lights were concerned, it acted like a snuffer upon a burning candle. There was nothing visible to Harry as he stood on the minister's steps unless he looked straight above him, and then he only thought he could faintly see the glimmer of the greatest planets. The maid had banged the door the instant he was beyond it, to keep out the fog, which was now oozing in around every loose window and door of every carriage and 'bus and house and shop in town. Not knowing which way to turn towards the High Street, he turned the wrong way, and lost almost half an hour groping contrarily in the darkness; but in that twenty-five or thirty minutes he collided with as many invisible

foot-passengers, who were as completely shrouded to his vision as if they had been spirits or he had been blind. He could not even see a street lamp until he was close to it, and then it appeared a vague, nebulous ball of yellow haze, like a will-o'-the-wisp moving in a cloud of steam. At last, by asking his way of a woman whom he had all but knocked down, he was started in the right direction, and groped along more confidently—in the gutter, for safety's sake—until he came upon a roaring, turbulent spot in the black night, and felt sure he had found the High Street. With two more steps he reached its pavement, and found it swarming with silent working-folk, moving slowly, hesitatingly ahead beside the hubbub of an unseen jam of vehicles in the roadway. A few nebulous blurs of yellow indicated near-by shops, and some moving yellow spots before him suggested the presence of omnibus and cab lights. A thousand vehicles were caught in a blockade, and from them and their drivers he heard a muffled tumult of crashing noises as wagons collided, of oaths and screams and shouted commands, and, of course, it being London, frequent volleys of good-natured chaffing, guying, and repartee.

He had been kept longer at the parsonage than he had counted upon, and now he had lost another

half-hour. The long band of light made by the windows of an omnibus was distinguishable close by, and he made his way to it—or to the conductor, who walked ahead, leading the sweating team by the light of a lantern in a glass box. From him he learned that the 'bus was going towards the Town Hall, otherwise he could not have known whither it tended.

"'Op aboard, if you like," said the conductor. "You'll be the only fare on any 'bus, if you do. A few minutes ago we all 'ad loads inside and out, but when the fog shut down the people got frightened of what might 'appen, and now you can 'ave any 'bus in the street all to yourself, at the hordinary fare. And, oh, I say," he called back, "Gord knows when you'll get to the 'All. I've been crawling to this 'ere turning and apast it for full arf an hour. What street might that be—d'you know?"

Ledyard mounted to the roof, and, looking down from it, could only faintly see the horses between the lights of his 'bus and those of the one ahead. In the same uncertain way he could make out the sombre bulk of whatever wagon was closest this side of the 'bus, but he could not see the horses that were before it. The 'bus kept crawling a few steps onward and meeting vehicles and veering out

of its course, until, as the driver remarked between his set teeth, "I'm blooming sure of one thing, and that is I dun'no' where I am."

The police, seeing no better than any one else, had failed to keep apart the up-stream and the down-stream of traffic, and so the two currents had blended and tangled. Hundreds of wheels were locked, and all might have been in a vehicular eddy and going round and round for aught any man could say. Ledyard felt that he knew one thing more than the driver, and that was that if he were ever to try to describe a just conception of the abode of eternal torment he would give an account of his experience on that 'bus in that black fog—of the babel of voices, the crash of collisions, the mysterious, fearsome strain upon his nerves, the blindness and the impotence that were combined in that situation. To hear the air beaten all around him by shrieks, cat-calls, shouts, and idle jokes, and to see no single being from whom a sound proceeded, was as close to a hellish sensation as he ever wanted to approach.

He pulled out his watch and struck a match to see its face. It was a quarter past six o'clock. Helen had been waiting an hour and a half. Perspiration had broken out all over him long before, and now his damp body was chilled to the marrow.

Imagination had opportunity to run riot, and he wondered all things. What if the crowd should be assailed by rowdies? What if a fire-engine should come dashing along? What if a horse should run away? But these things he knew were impossible. He thought of what a mercy it was that a calamity such as the falling of a black fog never befell Paris, where the most terrible creatures in Christendom would rise in great swarms, as out of the earth, to rob and garrote and riot under cover of that sooty blanket. And in the midst of this thought the fog was caught up, or dried up, or soaked into the earth, and there he was, close to Allen Street, and not two blocks from Helen. He heard the sigh of relief of thousands of men and women, like the letting-off of steam. He saw the mighty tangle of 'buses, cabs, carriages, and vans, the pale faces of the frightened women in the barouches and hansoms, the swarm of humanity on the pavements, the police still at their posts in the middle of the road. He leaped down the 'bus steps, dashed into the thick of the tangle of wheels, dodged this way and that under horses' heads and wagon-poles, and was within fifty feet of the Vestry Hall, when — the fog shut down again, like the screen of a camera, and blotted out everything, leaving Ledyard

in an atmosphere muddier and denser than before.

Against the crowd on the pavement he could not make the headway of a tortoise. A man carrying a blazing torch of resinous wood, such as the South Sea Islanders use, passed him, and he wondered how such a torch could be got in London, and so quickly. When it was too late it occurred to him that he should have bought it. A minute or two later there approached him a lamp—an ordinary household kerosene-burning lamp, carried in a soap-box. Behind it stood an invisible boy, holding it above his head. Ledyard bought the lamp and box for five shillings, and by its help gained much time in picking his way through the dense, silent, ghostly crowd. On the steps of the Hall, in its doorway, stood Helen Woolland.

"Oh, thank God! thank God!" said Ledyard. "I have died a thousand deaths in an hour for fear you would not be here."

"I should have stayed here if it had been till daylight," said she. "Have you any way of knowing the time?"

By holding his watch up to the lamp he saw that it was close upon seven o'clock.

"Have you the license?" he whispered.

"Yes; and you?" she replied.

IN THE BLACK FOG

"Everything is arranged," said he. "We were to have been at the chapel by this time. They will not wait above half an hour. But, dear Helen, I could not guarantee to go to St. Mary Abbott's, only one turning from here, in that time."

"Oh, what shall we do?" she moaned.

"We shall succeed," said he. "Though all the imps of Erebus, who have brought on this darkness simply to delay us, and who made us stand talking at cross-purposes almost an hour in the park, and who managed to make a clerk in the city misinform me about you when I arrived this morning — though all of them combine, yet we shall succeed."

"We shall! we shall!" Helen almost shouted. "I was all downcast, Harry, but your splendid courage picks me up again."

They groped their way across the street and stopped a hansom going in the wrong direction, so that it could turn out of the tangle without having to cross the road, which would have been impossible. An offer of a half-sovereign interested the cabby, and presently they were moving again, by fits and starts. All the 'bus conductors now carried lanterns or boxed lamps and walked in the road, and every cabby, their own included, had left his box and was leading his horse. Nothing was

visible except near-by steam-like moons of yellow where the nearest lights were moving. The impatient couple noticed that every horse which came into view for an instant was wet with perspiration, and was dropping thick white flecks along the road. The poor beasts, on whom the drivers depended, were more nervous than the men, for they knew what reliance was placed upon them. The cab ran against something, was lifted lurchingly, and fell back with a thud. The driver had fallen prone over the same obstacle—a prostrate lamp-post.

"Good job we 'aven't run on the pavement," said the cabby.

"You're jolly well on it now," some one shouted. Then there were heard women's screams, the clashing of a horse's shoes on the pavement, and, finally, a violent jolt of the wheels against the curb. There were a score of such incidents. Only think! the street lights, though incandescent lamps, could only be sighted at ten-feet distance, and then they looked like the effect of an arrested oar-stroke in phosphorescent water. An omnibus, which is usually like a brilliant lantern on fair nights, now disappeared in fifteen feet.

Helen clung to Ledyard. "I am so frightened," said she; "it seems like the end of the world—

only more terrible than any sort of ending I ever imagined. And the air is so clammy and cold and suffocating. It is like the breath of Death himself."

She had never been out in such a fog before. But all things must end, and in time a turning was found, and their route lay along quiet streets the rest of the way. The driver led his horse. Harry walked ahead, carrying the box and lamp. Fair progress without mishap was made, but he was so late and impatient that his watch was almost constantly in his hand. At the chapel the cabby was easily tempted to wait until the agitated young couple returned, to be taken to Oakley Street.

"It is ten minutes to eight o'clock," said Ledyard, looking at his watch by match-light, and speaking as one who read his death-sentence in the face of his time-piece.

"Then—then it has all been for nothing. It is useless to go on, isn't it?" Helen asked. Her nerves had suffered more than even she imagined, and her courage was now all but gone.

"Helen, you must decide what to do now," said Ledyard, checking her in the porch before the chapel door, which was outlined with a thin frame of welcoming light. "Let us think a moment before it is too late. Enemies and evil folk may say

that this has been a race into which I have led you that I may gain your houses and your money—"

"Oh, Harry, don't! I will not hear such talk even from you."

"But wait. I *am* selfish—very. I *have* raced for something—for you—for the right to call you mine. I am honest, you see. But you must decide. It is now evident that unless the fog lifts we cannot reach the house in Chelsea by eight o'clock. It is impossible."

"But we can be married before eight o'clock," said she, changing her attitude to what had been his. "That is all we have been trying to do. You are as excited as I, I really believe. Come, there is not a minute to lose."

"But the ceremony cannot possibly be performed in the seven or eight minutes that remain."

"Come, come, Harry," Helen argued. "Don't let us turn back now."

He was glad to have her lead him. He had lost the impetus of his first ardent emotion, and now, in cool sobriety, did not wish to dominate this most important act of both their lives. But she was leading him now as he had been minded to lead her, and he followed willingly.

They were man and wife when they were in the hansom again, limp and dejected, at twenty min-

utes past eight o'clock. The fog had thwarted them. They had not been pronounced husband and wife until after the clock in the church tower had struck. It had struck against their bare hearts, they fancied, so woful was the sound. They sat in the hansom hand in hand, she cast down by their ill success and almost exhausted by the emotional conflicts of the day, he grimly playing his part in the drama to its end. The fog was now thicker than ever. The imp called Misrule was lording it over all London, even though his purpose was, as these lovers thought, merely to thwart the too often equally mischievous will of his fellow-sprite Cupid.

"We have made a mess of everything," said he.

"What?" she asked. "Are we not married?"

"Thank God, yes. You know I did not mean that. That much we never will regret."

The lid in the roof of the hansom lifted, and the driver called down: "It's so beastly thick here I think we're by the river." At that instant the horse that drew them cluttered upon an asphalt pavement, and a lantern shot up out of nowhere, and was swung in the face of the trembling animal. By its light the couple in the cab saw a fence, an opening in it, and the beginning of a steep flight of steps.

"Are you bound to hell, or where are you driving?" a voice called out.

"Well, if it's hell, you ought to know," cabby called from his perch.

"You're on Albert Bridge, you blooming fathead, that's where y'are. And in another minute your 'orse 'd 'ave been falling down sixty odd steps into the Thames."

"Oh, Harry, I can't stand this! I shall go mad!" Helen cried, and leaped from the hansom to the roadway. Ledyard bade her stand still, and quickly joined her. Paying the cabman, he took his bride's hand, and they went into the fog and were lost in it.

"Forgive me for what I said about making a mess of everything. Bless you for reminding me that we are married," he said. "It is better fortune than I have dreamed of for many years."

She only squeezed his arm.

He led her towards a faint lamp, then towards another, and so by degrees across the first transverse street to a third lamp. Under it stood a policeman, only dimly visible when they were about to lurch into him.

"We must get to 301 quickly, Bobby," said Ledyard.

"I'm afraid our hurry is over," Helen whispered.

"Take 'old of my sleeve, then, one of you," said the good-natured constable, "and we'll grope for it."

He led and they followed, trailing along in a crablike way, the policeman passing his disengaged hand along the house railings, and at every third or fourth opening lighting a match and dodging up the steps to read the number of the house. On their way they ran into many persons, and one, an old woman of respectable appearance, clung to the constable and would not be shaken off.

"Please take me with you. No matter where you are going, let me be with you," she moaned. "I am lost, and I am so frightened."

"Stand there," said the policeman, leading her into the space before a flight of steps, "and I'll be back directly and take care of you."

"'Ere's yer 'ouse," he said, presently, and, accepting a fee of a few pence with hearty thanks, he left them.

Ledyard rang the bell, and when the door opened a great wall of fog rolled in and all but blotted out the maid in an instant.

"Shut that door, quickly," was shouted in a voice at which Helen shuddered as she recognized it as her aunt's. "Do you want the fog in-doors

as well as out? It's you, is it, Helen? You are the first to come, except the servants."

"Thank Heaven, then, we have not made a mess of anything!" Ledyard muttered.

"Who's with you?" the old lady asked.

"Mr. Ledyard brought me here, aunt."

"Humph! Well, you've done more than all the rest. Mr. Staple has telegraphed that he is safe in town, so prepare to welcome him at any moment."

The voice came nearer, accompanied by the heavy footsteps of the speaker, and presently the very stout, extremely hard and sour faced lady had reached the hall floor and had bowed stiffly to Mr. Ledyard.

"Bid Mr. Ledyard good-night, Helen," she said. "He will have no interest in the family matters which we are to discuss when the others arrive."

"I was hoping he would stay, dear aunt," Helen said, meekly.

"Stay? Child, you don't understand these things," said her aunt. "Mr. Ledyard must see the impropriety of his remaining."

"It shall be entirely as Mrs. Ledyard says, madam," Harry replied, mischievously.

"As Mrs. Ledyard says?" the old lady echoed. "Your mother—do you mean?"

"No, aunt; he means me. I'm Mrs. Ledyard."

A DANDY AT HIS BEST

EVERY man I had seen for weeks was bearded, and wore a fez of fur, and carried a big and murderous knife with a handle beautified by inlaid enamel or carved silver. Now I had come to a railway station in the same part of the Caucasus, and here I saw only the same men and a few Russians with blouses outside their trousers, and trousers inside their boots, or else in flat caps and colored uniforms. Yet, as I sipped my lemonade in the little hotel dining-room, there came in as smart a dandy as ever you saw on Madison Square or Piccadilly. He was tall and straight and slender, about thirty-five, and with the face of a soldier. His clothes fitted him like the enamel on a bicycle. He wore a spick-and-span new lounging suit of mixed gray wool, a Derby—or bowler—hat of brown felt, new tan-colored gloves, and boots that shone like two mirrors. His high collar, his scarf, and the tiny jewel which kept it

in shape were all of the correct fashion, and as neat as new pins.

He called up a tousle-haired Russian waiter, who moved as if he was made of wood, and who had such an affinity for that material that he fell over every table-leg and chair in the room.

"Toast and—er—two soft-boiled eggs and—er—coffee," said the dandy, "and look sharp with them."

"Coffee," the wooden-head repeated, and went away. And coffee was all he brought back, of course, for he had understood no other word of the order.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "No one here speaks English. He only understood the word 'coffee.'"

"This is the tenth time that I have been here," said the Englishman, "and yet they know no more English than when I first came here, ten years ago. If they think I'm any further along with their absurd lingo, they are mistaken. If I knew it as well as they do, I would not speak a word of it."

By means of equal large proportions of patience and pantomime he got his breakfast. Then he proposed a walk. An American would have proposed other things, but an Englishman always proposes a walk.

"Tourist?" I asked.

"Not exactly," said he. "I go in for shooting —a little—in a way, I mean to say. Odd thing about it is that I always seem to start from here, no matter where I'm shooting. I like the Black Sea country, you know—Sebastopol, Yalta, Kertch, Batoum, Tiflis—the only unspoiled corner of Europe, isn't it? So I start here and go on to Persia, Siberia, China, or wherever I need to go for special sorts of shooting; not shooting, exactly, either. I go in more for collecting. Have you come for bear? No? Ibex? No?"

"I am a civil engineer—an American—at work in the mountains," said I, "but there is a rising of the people, and I am ordered back here for safety."

"What idiots!" exclaimed Mr. Elliott—that was the name of this English dandy. "So that is it, is it? Why couldn't the fools say so? Here I have been for five days, waiting on the Russian officials, and not getting on a bit. I have wired to Petersburg and London, and the English ambassador replies to-day that I must abandon my trip, for reasons he cannot explain. But you have explained it —a rising in the mountains. How absurdly Russian all this is! They don't want me to know about their contemptible squabbles. They think

because I am English I must be a spy. They do not believe I am a hunter. It is so absurd—that an Englishman with a gun should be taken for a statesman in disguise."

"This is really a serious trouble," I said. "The people of half a dozen villages have turned brigands, and because two leaders have been caught and sent to Tiflis the others have stolen the son of the old major in command here and insist that their companions must be exchanged for the boy. There has been fighting, and some soldiers have been killed. Troops have been sent for, and the villages are to be burned—the people exterminated, also, I suspect, if they continue to resist."

"My word!" said Elliott. "Then my mind's made up. If the Russians don't control the mountains, they've no right to forbid my hunting there. I shall go ahead without their leave. Would you mind stepping back to the hotel with me? I'll order my boy to get ready at once."

"You'll be killed," said I.

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Elliott. "I merely wish to get a specimen of a certain animal, and what have Russian politics to do with that? It's an animal precisely like your mountain-goat in America, but it has white horns instead of black, and they are spiral in shape. Not one ex-

ists in any zoo or museum, and I have pledged myself to get one for my little collection at home."

"You'll have to get your goat with a brigade of Russian infantry," I remarked.

"As I look at it," said the Englishman, "the only trouble will be in bringing back this Russian major's son."

"Are you going to try that?"

"It will be pleasanter afterwards if I bring him back," Mr. Elliott answered. "Otherwise I could not very well come back myself—having been forbidden to go. If I don't get the boy, you see, I shall have to push on to the Persian Gulf, and in that case I'd go right on around the world so as to shoot for a few days in the Olympian Range in your State of Washington, where there is a sheep of the chamois sort of which no specimens have reached England.

"Oh yes," he added, after a pause, "it's a nuisance, but I'll have to get that little beggar, because I shall be obliged to come back for my kit. I can't take it with me. I never could get across that bare hill in front of the town with my five pony-loads of luggage and camp things without being stopped. I must simply take one man, and appear to be off for a ride."

"You are planning suicide," said I. "Those mountaineers will kill you."

"My dear fellow, you don't know them," said Elliott. "What are they to Kurds, or Mongols, or Afghans, or such Chinese as I knocked about among for months in western Sze-chuen? Kill me? They won't want to bother a poor devil of a hunter like me. Why, in ten years of hunting and travel on all the mountains and plains of Asia I have only once or twice met with incivility. I did have a little misadventure when I went through a part of western China for certain rare forms of the pheasant. Three bands in succession kept on peppering at me for days—and forcing me to pepper them back, I may say. I remember that because I did not get my morning tub or a change into pajamas at night for more than a week; that was the worst of it."

"I'll go with you on this trip," said I. "Come along."

"Will you?" Elliott inquired, while his face took on a very troubled expression. "'Pon my word, it's awfully good of you to propose it, don't you know; only I wouldn't, really, you know, if I were you."

"I can't force myself upon you," I said. "I can only ask you to let me go. If you won't, I'll toddle along an hour behind you."

"Oh, I say; really, now—it's quite too absurd," said Elliott. "If I get killed, it's in the interest of science and that sort of thing, but if you're hurt, that would be a horse of another color, wouldn't it?"

"I thought there was no danger," said I.

"Well—er—on my word, you Americans are so sudden and unaccountable. Why should you want to take such a risk? I've a reason for it myself. There's a goat that's only to be found on that mountain in all the world, and—"

"All right," said I. "I'll go with you."

"Then I won't take my boy," said the Englishman. "Three might seem a formidable force, mightn't it? Just you and I will go, and the best course is to go at once."

In ten minutes we were on horseback. In thirty minutes we were two brown specks dropping over the crest of the first foot-hill, leaving the town behind us, and facing the gate to the country of the outlaws—a road at the bottom of a narrow valley, whose precipitous grassy sides afforded the mountain folk every chance at us, and us no chance of escape from them.

"What's in that big roll behind your saddle?" I asked.

"I've only brought my Wolseley sleeping-bag,"

Elliott said, "and a suit of clothes for a change, and my pajamas, and mackintosh, and slippers, razors, and towels."

"One would think you were invited out for a week at a country-house," said I, who had brought literally nothing except a little quinine and witch-hazel, a tooth-brush and a cake of soap.

"I like to have plenty of changes," said he, "but of course it's impossible this time. I've been obliged once or twice to sleep in my clothes, and I know you'll think it's absurd, but I noticed I shot badly next day each time it happened. I missed a black leopard in India once for the want of my tub that morning. Now I make it a rule to bathe if I can only go through the motions with a quart of water."

"No matter where an Englishman is," said I, "in the Sudan or at the north pole, he still lives as he used to live in England."

"It is very remarkable that every one should be always charging an Englishman with his nationality," said Elliott.

"It is the only nationality that is worn like a coat of mail," said I.

"I dare say that's very clever," said he. "You Americans always say such clever things. But,

hello! Here are these mountain beggars. Now we shall see something."

We saw something indeed. The path widened out into a bowl-like valley, whose broad middle was the dried-up bed of a stream. On one side, the mountain sent up a sheer wall of rock; on the other side, an easy slope was dotted with small stone cabins, roofed with poles and thatching. And all were dominated by a crumbling tower of refuge, which told of constant attack and defence and turbulent existence. In the road and on the dried-up stream-bed were two hundred men on horses, with guns, whirling and curving round and round in contrary directions. Now and then a man or two, or half a dozen, rode out towards us, fired their guns at the sky, and rode back again. Their appearance and behavior were both murderous.

"What a fuss the silly beggars are making!" said my English friend, as he cantered forward.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"Keep on, straight ahead, barehanded," said he. "The one thing we mustn't do is to touch our guns. When we get to them, we will explain our business, and hire some of them to hunt with us."

His coolness and nerve were perfect. He rode as if he were enjoying a morning canter in Hyde

Park. "How did you get your boots so dusty?" he asked. His shone like polished ebony.

The mountain men continued to make fierce dashes at us, in larger parties now, with a greater waste of gunpowder. "We will ride straight into the crowd and look for the chap in command," said Elliott. We rode on, and in a minute it was evident that the next sally of the mountaineers must bring them and us together. Out rode half a dozen men, spurring their horses and bouncing almost out of their saddles to make themselves appear the more eager and terrible. They met us and rode past us, so that we were between them and the main body. Then another half-dozen rushed forward, and we were seized and pulled from our saddles before we suspected what their plan was.

"Make no resistance," said Elliott; "everything depends on our calmness."

As he spoke I saw his right arm shoot out, and one of his assailants was flung heavily on his back. The man had put his hands on Elliott's mouth, which proved more than he would suffer. Unencumbered, the Englishman strode among our captors until he saw a kingly but fierce-looking, gray-bearded man. Him he saluted in a military way, extending his right hand in European fashion. But the chief was not to be dissuaded from his

plan of action. We were both overpowered, our guns were taken, we were put on our horses, and with our hands tied behind us we were led on and on up the mountain, without stopping until long after nightfall.

We were taken to separate houses, and were lost to each other; but I, who knew a little Russian, learned a day or two later that our captors had sent to the town to discover what they could about us, and, in consequence, the Englishman was released and had gone, with two of the villagers, in search of the goat he was so bent upon getting. I was declared to be in the pay of the Russians, and, presumably, a Russian spy. Like the little son of the Russian major, I was to be offered in exchange for the captured brigands. My experience as a prisoner is of no especial interest. Except at meal-times, I was kept tied, but in no other way was I ill-treated.

Days came and went, and were taken up with the same routine of coarse feeding and of the agony which the ropes brought to my arms. The only variation came when I was allowed to walk in a muddy, walled court behind the cabin. One night I could not sleep because of the strumming on a drum, the yelling, and the firing of guns that went on in the neighborhood. I imagined

that the Russians were expected, and that the mountaineers were nerving themselves for a fight. As I lay wondering what was to be the outcome for me, I felt a hand on my shoulder. A match was struck, and I saw the English hunter bending over me.

"Hello!" I whispered. "Is that you?"

"Speak loud as you like," said he. "I've got that goat — magnificent specimen. They're all celebrating my return. I got my men to bring up two gallons of vodki. They think I've gone to bed. Now I must go back, or I'll be missed. Roll over and let me cut your hands free; there, that's better, isn't it? Now listen. In one hour —as near as you can figure—walk out, climb the wall at the back, and go straight up the mountain until you are well out of hearing. Go at least a mile, and wait until you hear this call." (He imitated the cluck of some wild bird.) "Answer it; I'll join you, and we shall have hours' start of every one."

"You're a brick," said I. "Have you got the Russian boy?"

"It's hard luck," said he, "but I haven't even found out where they're keeping him."

"He's right over our heads in this shanty, or I miss my guess," I said. "I'll bring him along."

"Splendid!" said Elliott; "then I can go back to the village, in touch with my kit once more. I've only one change with me, and the prospect seemed so awful that, really, I've fancied I could feel my nerve going."

As soon as Elliott disappeared I got up and lighted a match to search, first of all, for the revolver which had been taken from me. It was not on the ground-floor, so I climbed the ladder-like stairs to the upper story. There, by the first flash of a second match, I saw my rifle in a corner, my revolver and belt beside it, and the Russian boy — or, rather, his shock head of yellow hair—at the top of a pallet by my feet. I did not touch my weapons or awaken the lad, but crept back to my own shake-down of straw with its blanket covering, and began to count the minutes by numbering each second with a slowness and regularity which taxed my patience more, perhaps, than any feat I ever performed in my life.

In that way I had counted 1760, when two of my guards came to look at me, and, in fact, to look the whole house over. In opening the door one fell in upon his knees. In climbing to the second story, the other one suffered such a heavy fall, and from such a height, that I feared he was hurt and would have to remain with me. I

pretended to sleep through all the racket, and, presently, after an argument whether they should stay or go back to their hilarious companions, the hullabaloo outside allured them, and they left me once again. Instantly I ran to the upper room and took my weapons and woke the boy. The latter proved a trying task, for he slept as children do, and kept me shaking him and whispering to him for at least a couple of minutes. When he finally did wake up he began to fight me. I tried to explain that I was a friend and was rescuing him, but my Russian was not sufficient. He kicked and beat me, and at last he screamed. There was nothing else to do, so I gagged him with a handkerchief, and at last, Heaven knows how, got him, kicking and struggling, over the wall.

With him in my arms, I climbed the steep mountain-side in the pitch black of the night, making no noise, and never resting until I had put the village far behind us. Then, pulling the boy down beside me, I sat between two great trees and waited to hear the "cluck" of my friend. What was it that I did hear? Voices! calls!—and coming nearer and nearer. There was no doubt about it. The village was aroused and afoot. Our flight was discovered. Presently I heard two men crash-

"THE FIRST MAN CARRIED A TORCH"

ing towards me, and then I saw the flashing of a torch which one was carrying. Thank Heaven! one of them was Elliott. I distinguished his voice and then his words—evidently addressed to me: "Run farther; don't answer; climb higher up."

I picked the boy up, though he had apparently come to his senses and struggled no longer. One pair of feet, I thought, would make less noise than two. I ran till, quite out of breath, I fell on my knees beside some bushes. I discovered that only this man, whom Elliott was pretending to assist, was on my trail. The voices of all the others were fading away. I waited with my rifle cocked, but when the torch came quite close it threw nothing but the shadow of the bush upon the boy and me. Elliott was a yard behind the torch-bearer.

"Cluck!" I made the signal, reckless of consequences.

Then I saw a strange thing. The Englishman threw both hands around the man in front of him, and, putting a knee against the man's back, pulled him over.

"Now," he whispered to me, "tell this man in Russian to keep on straight ahead of both of us, and that we will kill him like a fly if he tries to turn back or utters a cry."

I whispered this in the mountaineer's ear, and

at the same time took away his fearful-looking knife and probably useless pistol. "Tell him 'straight ahead to the path which leads across the mountain'—say that; that's right. A goat can scarcely descend that path, but it's the only way to avoid houses and people. Now, then, on like mad."

Elliott took the torch and pushed the half-tipsy mountaineer, who went stumbling and crashing through the bush like a wounded bear. I pulled the boy along by one hand. At last we came to a hollow between the main bulk of the mountain and a corner or shoulder. Here, on level ground, we pushed swiftly ahead, knowing that we had found the trail.

"We're all right now," said I.

"We may *be* all right, but let us thank fortune we can't see how disreputable we *look*," said Elliott, who, I truly believe, was wretched for fear he looked untidy.

We spoke with our natural voices, and lo! we were hailed in the mountain tongue by some one ahead of us. We strode forward, and began to see the gleam of another torch. A second searcher, leading all the rest, was waiting for us. Elliott thrust his torch into the mountaineer's hand, and he and I, with our rifles ready for use, walked

in single file behind our prisoner, almost hidden by him. Presently we saw the new disturber of our plans seated on a log, tired and breathless.

"Cover him as I call," said I, and I shouted, "Don't move, or you—"

Instantly we stepped on either side of our torch-bearer, with our rifles at the astonished man's head. He threw down his knife and pistol, and uttered no protest when I gave him orders to run ahead with the other man, on pain of death. Elliott kept both prisoners moving, and I halted and stuck one of the torches in the ground while I caparisoned the Russian boy with the daggers and pistols we had taken from our prisoners. I removed my handkerchief from the boy's mouth, and laughed. I saw that I had made him look the most bloodthirsty child in all the world. "Now, come," said I; "we must catch up to the others."

I stooped to pick up my torch, and felt something rip my coat sleeve and run warm down the same arm. I turned just as the boy was pulling back a dagger with which he had stabbed me. He leaped away, jerked out a pistol, and would have shot me had I not been too quick for him. I pinioned both his hands and began to reason with him in the best flow of Russian that ever came to my aid.

"Don't talk Russian to me," said the little firebrand. "I kill Russians."

What a discovery! I had run away with the wrong boy!

I threw his weapons into the brush and pushed him ahead, with my rifle aimed at him as a warning. He tried to dodge past me and run back to the village. He was not afraid to die, as his elders were. I was obliged to gag him again and pick him up in my arms and run with him.

How merrily my English friend laughed when he heard of my discovery and of all that had happened! I told him while he bandaged up the ugly wound in my arm and while, at the same time, I covered our prisoners with my gun after making them sit on the ground.

"Keep them sitting like that, with one torch burning at a time," said Elliott. "You can control them until I get back—in an hour, or, at the outside, two hours."

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"Back to get the Russian boy," said he. "My dear old chap, don't make a fuss. You see how it is. I might have to travel for weeks without fresh clothes if I have to run away from my kit. I'm getting positively beggarly, you know—and,

really, my nerve all goes when I feel a bit beggarly."

Of course I did not believe a word of his plea for fresh apparel. I thought he saw a chance for fresh adventure, which was more to my taste. We put my prisoners down on their stomachs, head to feet, and all their heads away from me, and then off he went on his desperate errand. It seemed a long time before any sounds except those natural to the forest disturbed me, but at last I heard the tramp of many feet. I had little doubt, then, that my friend had been captured, and the villagers were coming after me in a body. But of this I could not be sure, and in the uncertainty I got well in front of my prisoners, ready to make a dash at the last moment.

"Elliott!" I shouted. "Elliott!"

"Right!" he called back.

The sound of tramping men grew nearer and louder, and presently the first man came in sight in the light of his own torch. It was not my friend, nor was the next man he, nor the next, nor the next. At last he did appear, fifth in the procession, leading by one hand a bright-eyed, gentle boy. The first four men were tied, each to the other, by their hands. He had one more prisoner than I. On the back of one he had tied his

goat's head and skin in a neat pack like a knapsack.

"Why did you leave the houses behind?" I asked. "You appear to have brought all the rest of the village."

He made no reply for a long while. Then he suddenly burst out laughing.

"Ha! ha! That's awfully clever," said he. "How deucedly bright you Americans are! Nobody but an American would have thought of saying that about the houses."

"But do you mean to take all these men and deliver them to the authorities?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "Let Russia catch her own prisoners. I propose we set them free, one at a time, as we near the valley. Then, while they sweat up this fearful mountain, we can flag a train and be off."

That was precisely what we did.

When we were alone I noticed that something worried him. Presently he relieved his mind.

"I'm troubled by what you said about my leaving the houses behind," he remarked, "for, really, I don't think I did so badly. I brought away all except two men who had gone off down the road after you. I couldn't go after them, could I? I didn't really want them, you know."

"That was all a joke about the houses," I said. "I think you did wonders."

"Well, I don't know about that," said he, "for two of them were so fast asleep I did not wake them even when I took their weapons away and tied them up. The nastiest job I had was in changing my clothes."

"You changed your clothes?" I asked.

"Well, yes; you see, I thought I'd have more nerve—a bit steadier, you know—if I felt fresh. But the trouble was that I did not make up my mind to do it until I had shown myself in my true colors to two wide-awake men who were guarding the boy. Then I was forced to bring them into my hut, and stand them with their faces to the wall while I had a good wash and a complete change. That might have been a bit nasty, mightn't it—keeping two mutinous beggars in order under those circumstances, especially, you know, if one happened to turn his head just as I was putting on my shirt?"

THE SAD FATE OF A NEW WOMAN

IT was midsummer in New York City, and they were talking of a holiday journey. They were two young brokers—Burville, the drawing-room hero, and Marlin, the bookworm and recluse.

"I want you to come to Jack Hibberd's as much as ever," said Marlin, "and he urges me to bring you—but I'm not so sure you'll like it, you see."

"Why? Isn't it still a cabin in the heart of the forest—'the core of the kingdom of rest,' as you called it when you came back from there last year?"

"But Jack has married, and writes me that his wife is there."

"I like that all the better; much better. I long ago tired of men by themselves. They are rude and coarse, and—well, I much prefer them with women about. Whom has he married?"

"Why, a Miss Mildred Starke. Maybe you

know her; she's a New-Yorker, and I used to see her name in the society news."

"The deuce you say. But, no; Miss Starke, whose name was so often published, has not married; it is impossible!"

"Yes, it is she. They met in Chicago. He lives there, and she was there last year attending a convention of some sort. Quite a love-match, they say."

"Love-fiddlestick! Old man, if you knew anything—about society people, I mean—you would not couple love and Mildred Starke in one sentence. She was at a Chicago convention last year, and we did hear that some man was showing her a great deal of attention—I remember that, and how we all laughed at the idea. But married—well, she'd be the one to laugh at that; and even if it were possible, it would not be for love. Man alive, the new woman believes in love as much as you do in small-pox—as a disease—and if there ever was a new womany new woman it was Mildred."

"Tell me about her," said Marlin. "An elocutionist, wasn't she?"

"She gave readings and recitations only to prove the capacity of woman for independence. Her mother is very rich—the widow of old Brummel

Starke, the lifelong dandy who spent his whole time in Paris. Miss Starke would not accept a penny she did not earn. She's a new woman, in spite of being a very pretty one, that's all. She will not have a man about her—not to carry a hand-bag. She even broke her own saddle-horse; wears bloomers when on a bicycle; is the only woman who can cast a fly like a man; learned the trick because she said that men thought they owned fishing as a masculine monopoly, and she wanted them to find out their mistake. She is president of the Pasquatoddy Fishing Club of women—the only one there is. More about her? Yes, she's interesting enough. Why, she was suspected of writing startling letters to the *Sun* in favor of the new régime of the unshackled sisterhood of unsexed women—and never denied it. No woman went to greater lengths than she; no lady, I mean, for it must be admitted that she was always gentle and graceful, and all that. Still, she went so far that she was too much for the women of the fashionable St. Barbara's Mission, and the University Settlement, too, I believe. And then she slummed on her own account, talking down marriage and love, and telling the shop-girls and mechanics that seven-tenths of the misery in the world came of falling in love and marrying—'binding couples to-

gether with only one hand free,' she called it; 'tying folks together so as to have double misery and hardship and only a single chance to rise.' That sort of talk wasn't popular with natural folk like those in the tenements, and they guyed and laughed at her, so that she had to write to the papers to get a quiet hearing. Oh, you can see it's not that Mildred Starke who has married your friend."

"She is married, just the same, and to the royalest good fellow you will ever meet, Burville. He's a giant, a tremendous chap, with black curly hair, and skin like a Spaniard's, who was quite as little inclined to marriage as she; a fellow who followed a rifle wherever it took him, from the Rockies to Africa. He's a man who will manage his own home with a pretty firm hand, I should think. I'm glad you don't mind the new conditions at his shack in the woods, for I very much want to see how Jack Hibberd works in double harness."

"Mind it?" said Burville; "I can hardly wait to see how his wife will look when I tell her I have resolved to pin my faith to the old women hereafter, since the new ones show no belief in their own doctrines."

What he really did say, as he strode ashore from the Lake Champlain steamer, and she put her hand

in his, was: "Well, Mrs. Hibberd, since love is a delusion, and marriage is a mistake, how can I congratulate you?"

"You only remember part of what I used to say," the bride merrily replied. "You forget that I always said that 'congratulations on marriage come at the wrong end of it.'"

Her great blue eyes laughed as she swept by him up the woodland road, with two girl visitors who had come by the same boat. She was very stylishly clad—not at all as she used to dress, in stiff collar, starched shirt-bosom, mannish waistcoat, and a skirt as tight as a lonely trouser-leg, but all in a frou-frou of loose drapery and lace and ribbons.

"By Jove, how beautiful she is!" exclaimed Marlin, the impressionable bookworm, turning to speak to Burville, but saying the words in the ear of the young husband.

"Thank you, old man, though you did not mean me to hear you," said Hibberd. "But I know that she is better than beautiful." He walked ahead, and then, catching up to Burville, was in turn mistaken for Marlin.

"To think of that being Mildred Starke," said Burville.

"But it isn't, you know," said the happy man.

"She only used to be. Oh, no apologies; that's all right. But, really, you chaps ought to get yourselves straightened out, or you'll quarrel with one another by mistake. What you want is a cocktail; come, I'm the doctor here. What 'll it be? Manhattan or Martini? You know the ropes, Marlin; before I make the cocktails, I'll go and get the blanket suits. Have you told our friend that we all dress in blankets here? Mrs. Hibberd is attending to the ladies. You must get along without them awhile. No, they don't wear blankets, but they put on shirt-waists if they have them. We all go in for comfort here."

The place was nearly a mile of woodland, beside the lake, and deep among the trees were two log huts, a large one containing the men's quarters, the kitchen, and the dining-room; the smaller one being the women's "shack," their sleeping-room, where the beds were curtained apart, and where everything was as dainty and neat as the exterior was rude. The men's sleeping-room was the general assembly-room, also, in the big "shack," where the beds took the form of bunks around the walls. In one end of that room was a piano, and in the middle of it was a great round table, bearing magazines and pipes and tobacco-jars, newspapers, match-mugs, and ash-receivers—relics of the

days gone by, when the place was a bachelor's retreat. Modern rifles and guns shone against the walls, beside old flint-locks, tomahawks, Sioux war-clubs, snow-shoes, spears, and many well-mounted heads of big game. When the men had put on their blanket trousers, buttoned over blanket shirts, and Hibberd was bringing in the cocktails, they noticed that Mrs. Hibberd was alone on the porch of the woman's "shack," looking towards the men's quarters. She stood there until after the men had emptied their glasses and had gone out by a back door, upon Hibberd's invitation, to see his kennel of high-bred dogs. From the dogs the men went to see the new keeper's house and then the spring, which had been walled in with masonry. They spent two hours in these employments, and were called from them by the dinner-horn. Mrs. Hibberd was still standing on the porch of the woman's "shack," but the other ladies were with her. Jack Hibberd waved a hand to her and she waved hers in response.

"She does not look quite well," Burville thought.

To dinner all brought keen appetites and sharpened wits, so that the meal was everything that it should have been. The company thought the bride as brilliant as was possible—except Burville.

He fancied he had never seen her less so; but, after all, there was less change in her, he reflected, than he had expected to find in one who had made a right-about-face upon all her old ideas of what a woman's career should be.

"I envied her her happiness," said Marlin, when Burville asked him afterwards if he saw that Mrs. Hibberd was distrait at dinner. "I am sure that her husband noticed nothing. Any one could see how proud he was of her."

"He may not have noticed her depression. He is too vigorous and full of animal spirits to be finely sensitive, perhaps," said Burville. "I once knew a man whose wife said that when she was in tears she had to tell her husband so, otherwise he would never have known it."

"That is not fair to Jack," said Marlin.

"Then I take it back," said Burville; "believe me, I like him very much. He is as strong as a lion, and yet to his wife he will always be a kitten. My! but he must have been as brave in love as he is in hunting, to have won her away from her notions. If I am correct in fancying her out of sorts to-day, it is because our coming has reminded her of New York—of home. I don't wonder; the solemn woods and her former gay surroundings in town are very dissimilar places."

Sapient man, to divine the fleeting emotions of a woman's mind; a marvellous feat—unless the new woman is very much simpler than the old.

After dinner, all assembled in the large room in the men's "shack," beside the great round table and on the edges of the bunks nearest to it. Three or four men had driven over from the nearest summer resort, and the company had become large, as well as brilliant, for it contained a poet, a novelist, a traveller equally famous, and—among the women—another than Mrs. Hibberd who had been a popular public entertainer.

"We expect a grand time to-night," one of the new-comers said to the bride.

"I do, too," said she, a trifle wearily, keeping her eyes on the open dining-room doorway.

"But we expect you to give us the greatest pleasure, out of your abundant talent."

"Oh, please don't ask anything of me," she said; "it's a long time since I have faced an audience."

"Jack must be making punch by the gallon," said the poet.

"By the barrel, I should think," Mrs. Hibberd replied.

"I can see him—up to his elbows in it," said the poet. "Oh, Jack, come in and fill a pipe, man.

The longer you keep us waiting, the better the punch will taste when we get it."

"Do you really think so? Do you think that is a truth that applies generally? I do not," said the bride.

"You think that punch deferred maketh the heart sick, eh?" the novelist interposed.

"Some things make the heart tired," she replied.

The poet put down his pipe and recited some of his verses, after which the renowned traveller told of an adventure while tramping in Thibet with a priest. There was then a general demand for a song from the bride; and she arose and went to the piano, saying, "I will sing to you a love-song that Jack used to like." She sang the ballad very softly and prettily, and then said: "Here's another favorite of Jack's; that is, it used to be." This sung, she flung herself into a flood of operatic melody, and, almost without pausing, sang a negro, and then an Irish ditty, and followed them with one of Whitcomb Riley's exquisite poems in dialect set to music. The air was heavy, and the veins of the listeners pulsated with the flood of melody that she poured forth. Her husband brought in the punch and served it while she sang. He gave to her the first glass, putting it on the piano-top so as not to interrupt her, and touching

her rosy cheek with a finger-tip, tenderly, as he passed behind her to serve another. She sang like a thrush in spring-time, and abundant applause came from the whole company in a long fusillade of clapping and chorus of praises.

Then the poet gave a series of recitations of his verses: comic, pathetic, religious, homely. Jack Hibberd came in and took the only vacant chair—as it happened, the one farthest from his beautiful bride. The poet showed great histrionic talent; bent knuckles stole to the corners of wet eyes, and handkerchiefs followed them. Women laughingly confessed that their feelings had been worked upon. One man admitted that he had wept a little, and another said that he always lost his self-control over certain things of the poet's. The bride moved from the piano to the edge of a bunk, and sat there with her psyche knot just touching the top of the bunk above her, and her face in its deep shadow. At last, the poet did his most effective thing, a description of tender scenes in the life of a gentle, heroic old farmer, who saw his wife laid away, his son enlisted for war, his daughter marry and emigrate. The bride, so newly torn from her home, broke down utterly. Tears streamed down her face, and she hid it in her handkerchief.

"Don't mind me," she said, "it's all nonsense." Then a great sobbing began to rack her frame, and, ashamed, she flung herself back upon the bunk, and the company could only see the movements of her knees and of one elbow that told of the convulsions that strained her body.

The poet's satisfaction was complete. He had never affected an auditor like that—and such a bright and worldly woman, too. That was the highest praise—unless, perhaps, the royalties on his books were higher—than any he had yet provoked. Jack Hibberd, phlegmatic by nature and tired by his day's work of entertaining, smoked his pipe and looked on; a trifle slow-minded, an out-of-door man and brother to nature.

"I never thought that Mildred could let go of herself like that," he said to the person nearest to him.

Then there were calls for the bride to play. Oh, no, she did not feel like it. Then would she not recite? "Yes, yes," and "Oh, please," from the full chorus. So she rubbed her eyes and looked at her husband for inspiration—but the good-natured soul was smoking, so that she recited a bit of New York street dialect and a poetical recollection of school-day fun—things that had "taken" in the tenements. Now, she looked again at her husband, as if for approval.

"You know what I like, Mildred," he said.

"Oh, no, not 'The Light Brigade,'" she protested.

"Please," said he.

It seemed absurd for such a slender slip of a woman—perhaps it seemed absurd for any woman—to try to render that masculine, impassioned, heroic, and majestic poem. But the company saw the bride undergo a mighty gathering of herself together. Then the words began with a magnetic ring, with flashing eyes, tautened sinews, with the little woman's breast thrown out and her chin held up, and with a voice that played on the emotions of her hearers as if her tones were fingers, they were harps, and their feelings were tightened strings. Her words, uttered in volleys, shot through her hearers, and the woods caught them far away and sent them back with mighty force still left in them—a marvellous feat for a young woman. For days afterwards all talked of the performance as a dramatic triumph that would have made a woman's fortune on the stage of one of the world's capitals. Everything had been ready for it, to be sure; the audience had been wrought up, and she herself had been sensitized, keyed up, set vibrating. It was magnificent in consequence.

The women went to bed.

The men smoked awhile, and drank, and exchanged anecdotes. In the pauses, they heard the laughter and voices of the ladies in the smaller cabin.

The next day brought fulfilment of all that the first day had promised. The breath of the woods was perfumed, the women were gay as well as beautiful, the fish were obliging, the wind bellied out the sails, laughter was flung about in waves, like festoons beneath the tree branches. In the late afternoon, while the other ladies were dressing, Burville found the bride in a hammock on the porch of the ladies' quarters.

"Where's my boy?" she asked.

"I don't know, just now," said Burville. "He's a model host, that's all. He has been devoting himself to us all day."

"I must have him; I can't stand it any longer," she said. Then she called, "Jack! Jack!"

He appeared, dressed like a summer dandy.

"What do you want, dear?"

"You, darling."

"Oh!"

He got into the hammock with her, so that his shoes hung beneath her head, and her feet were beneath one of his arms.

"I am an unhappy woman," said she. "I have

had enough of this. I want to go to mamma. She always loves me, and never changes."

"I'll go, too," said Jack.

"You needn't; she doesn't love you."

"How long have you been married, Mr. Hibberd?" Burville asked.

"Two months," said Hibberd.

"Two months!" Mrs. Hibberd repeated, in despair. "Hear the man! It will be three months in three weeks and two days."

"Heavens, Mildred! You are an old married woman," said the husband.

"It's not what it's cracked up to be," said she.

"Why?" Burville asked. "What's the matter? Are you unhappy? You? You, who sang so, last night; recited so, played so merrily? You, the life of last night—the most wonderful night ever spent in Bohemia!"

"H'mph. Don't say 'you' to me. Let me say it to you, rather. I gay?" she asked. "Why did I seem so? Do you think it was for the company? Not a word of it; not a smile; not an effort."

"Hey-dey," exclaimed Burville.

"Oh," she cried, "I'll tell it. I'll have it out. I loved this man. He took me from my home

and ties. He could not wait—not long enough for me to get a proper trousseau from abroad. He was so eager, so impatient, so carried away by love. He longed to bring me to this patch of woods, with only the dear dogs to bother us, or separate us. He had been a great entertainer, a confirmed host; but we were to be alone. Well, our friends came and he showed his talent. He is a perfect host; I see it clearly; there is no disputing it. He went to meet them at the wharf at ten minutes to two o'clock yesterday afternoon, and from that moment he forgot me. He asked me to look out for the women; well, I am not a perfect entertainer; I am a bride. I'm on the edge of my honeymoon. I bargained for attention, for homage, for affection. I was shoved aside—all day—all night. I got no word, nor look, nor thought. Oh, it was horrible. As the dreadful night wore on, and he buried himself in the kitchen, I could endure it no longer. I played what pieces he had praised. He did not come; he did not come. I sang again the first things I had ever sung for him—to stir his conscience through his memory. He stayed in the kitchen, playing the host. Oh, he loves to play the host—better than he loves his wife. I sang on, and played on, everything. Never have I played or sung so well,

for I seemed to be fighting for life—for more, for my husband's love.

"Oh, you cannot understand me, but he can. At last, he came in. Not to me, but to his guests —with horrid punch. It was delicious, but he did not ask me how I liked it. He asked the others, and when the women said it was sweet, he went away and made more and made it sourer, and stayed away. I listened to the poet and did not hear him. I could not stand it. I could have gone to him in the kitchen, but it was his place to come to me. He did not come, and I broke down and cried. They thought the poet had worked on my tender chords—I who am all adamant—callous already, to every tender influence. I was crying over the tragedy of my heart, crying for my husband, for the love I had lost. Then he came in. There was nothing more to do for the guests. He had given them my day and my night. He took the chair farthest from me. He saw me in tears, and did and said—what? Nothing. I determined to warm his heart; to blow the spark (if there was a spark of love left) into the old flame again. I recited what I knew he liked, and warmed him a little, so that he asked for my best, that I had left untouched, 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.' I seemed to myself to be inspired, and that

feeling gave me genius. I knew it was my last and only chance. The company thought my fires blazed like that for them; that they had worked me up; that I was a perfect hostess, wearing myself into hysteria for them. When I had finished, he led to their cabin the ladies who were nothing to him—and I followed. He kissed me good-night. Yes, he did kiss me good-night. I admit that. It was because I flung myself in his way, and he had to kiss me or trample on me."

"Honey," said Jack Hibberd, "you are a humbug."

"But, as I was about to say, Mr. Burville, it is all over. Now, I have endured a second day of it, and can stand it better—until I get back to my mother."

MRS. RUPPERT'S CHRISTMAS

A STORY OF AN ACTUAL HAPPENING

MRS. JOHN RUPPERT made great preparations for a merry Christmas on the Wednesday before that holiday; indeed, there was so much promise of a good time that when she told her children the festivities were to begin, in old-country fashion, on the night before Christmas, it seemed to her that there would be no lack of pleasure to spread over Christmas eve and the great day as well.

She said so to her husband, as he sat stretching his legs and smoking his clay pipe; and, also, I may say, finding himself continually in her way—as he would have been anywhere in the room except upon the ceiling—so rapidly did she bustle about, here, there, and everywhere. This energy of hers was principally nervous; a mere glance at her spare body and tightly drawn, colorless skin showed that she possessed very little physical strength.

"Ve make 'em such a cholly Ghristmas; nopoddy can bead it, eh, Chon?" she called to him.

"Yah, you vas righd, Minnie," said the tired toiler, raising his deeply lined and bearded face with something of an effort; and then, with a greater effort, smiling faintly at his newly-vigorous spouse, "You sayt ve vould git a goot Ghristmas. Und I didn't dink ve could manage it."

Few others in Brooklyn were in such straits as to have been able by looking in on the Rupperts to perceive anything in their condition to warrant the high spirits of which the husband, wife, and children were all alike possessed. The wife was not only pinched and wan, she was poorly dressed, especially for winter weather. The children were as badly off, covered rather than clothed, and showing by their waxen skins and hollow cheeks a pressing need of nutritious food. The floors of the house were all bare, and within the four walls there was not a single trifle or ornament or superfluity except what had come there for this Christmas—in fact, there was less of furniture than of clothing, and there had been less of food than of either until a fortnight ago. For John Ruppert had been out of work up to that time for two months or more, and it was his being at work once again and earning a dollar a day which so

elated his little flock that even their neighbors felt the reflection of their happiness.

Mrs. Ruppert had nearly a dollar which she felt that she could spare for Christmas and still manage to buy coal and food through the week until her husband brought another six dollars for as many days of hard labor at grinding drugs in the Hardacre Mills in this city. Mrs. Ruppert is a very sober-looking, middle-aged German woman, and has five little babies besides the one that drags at her breast, but she has all a German's fondness for children and for turning a holiday to their account. The first thing she did was to buy a Christmas tree; not exactly a tree, but a foot and a half off the end of a bough of a tree, which answered all purposes perfectly. Only ten cents was spent on that ornament, yet it caused the big-eyed, hollow-cheeked little Rupperts at home to leap and dance and shout with delight when it was brought in-doors and set up in a dark corner of the children's bedroom—a sort of closet which looks very small, yet must, at least, be bigger than a bed, because there is a bed in it, and still there was room to crowd the tree in at the foot.

Next, Mrs. Ruppert put out a quarter of a dollar in sugar hearts, bits of tinsel, gorgeous red and blue glass balls, and broken candy. With the

change she had left, she bought a few of the cheapest toys of painted wood and tin, and then dressed the tree by tying all these things to it with pink cord, so that it gradually grew into a work of art as gorgeous as a stained-glass window. As though there was to be no end to the good-luck, Santa Claus came—at least, his spirit appeared in the heart of a neighbor. She came in with half a dozen second-hand toys, no worse off than to have had their paint dulled and scratched by a year's wear, and these were done up in parcels, and either hung on the tree close to the trunk, where the branches were strong, or laid on the block of wood in which the tree was fastened.

When Freddie, aged fifteen, the eldest boy, came home from work on Wednesday night, he gave his mother a great deal of help in fixing up the tree, and he and she talked over the long period, eight weeks or more, when the two dollars Freddie earned included almost every penny that came to the house for the family of eight to live upon. The mother and son chatted in this way—as women love to do. And out in the big front room, which is the dining-room and old folks' bedroom and family sitting-room all combined, there in silence sat John Ruppert, a stalwart, brown-bearded, big man, in very coarse clothes, still smoking

his penny clay pipe, and finding it sweeter than any he had smoked in a long while, just because everybody was so contented, and things all looked so uncommonly rosy.

Yesterday morning he and his eldest boy went their separate ways to work, and the four younger children in the bed in the little room, covered over by a German mattress, exactly like a greatly overgrown pillow, stared first into the dark corner to see whether the tree was really there, or whether the entire Christmas doings were a dream, so as to know whether it was worth while to wake up or not. The tree was there, and there was also an unwonted smell of cooked breakfast coming from the other back room, as if in double proof of the good-luck which had befallen the family. That was in the morning.

In the evening things were different.

Before it was yet time for the man and the boy to return home from work, a policeman rapped at the door. The door, by the way, is almost as tall as the house, which is nothing but a long, low box, one story high, and setting back from the street in stubborn reference to the time, not long gone by, when the street was a thoroughfare between vacant lots and squatters' shanties instead of the well-appearing, busy street of shops

and generally comfortable homes that it is now.

"Does Mrs. Ruppert live here?" the policeman asked.

"Yes, sir," answered a little German woman, a neighbor, who happened to be visiting the Rupperts, and was nearer the door than Mrs. Ruppert was when the officer rapped.

"Has she any children?" he wanted to know.

"Six," said the woman.

"Then God help her," said the officer, "for her husband is dead."

"Come in and tell her," said the neighbor, and the bluff but tender-hearted bluecoat feared that his duty might compel him to do so, though he hated the task immeasurably.

"Tell her, you," said he.

"Ach Gott!" exclaimed the neighbor woman. "It vos you dot came to tell her—den vhy don't you do it? Don't scare her, blease. Make id owd chently."

The policeman lumbered into the room and across it to where Mrs. Ruppert stood, stringing a broken doll for the Christmas tree, and she looked up at him with wonder slowly creeping into her eyes.

"Are you Mrs. Ruppert?" he inquired. Then he

went on with his dismal duty: "Your husband is dead, ma'am. I'm very sorry, ma'am. He fell dead of heart disease while he was doin' his work in the mill in Ne' York. They've brought his body over to the morgue."

He meant to be most kind and tactful, and for however much he fell short of his aim we must blame his clumsy tongue and not his heart.

There can be no use in dwelling upon what Mrs. Ruppert did. She was a nervous and emotional woman, and very weak withal. She screamed and cried and flung herself on the bench in the sitting-room, and refused to be comforted. Afterwards, whenever one of her paroxysms of grief passed away, she sat up and tried to look into the future for a moment, but it was too terrible. The man she loved and upon whom she depended was dead, and there were the five younger children all too small to work, and an undertaker already in the room, talking about thirty-five dollars; and there was the Christmas tree—it was too much for her, and she fell back again and seemed nearer to being heartbroken every time she was seized with crying.

Many kind women of the neighborhood came in and did what they could to console her, crying with her, putting their arms around her, and

washing the children and talking to the undertaker and policeman. It was queer how kind everybody who had anything to do with the matter instantly became. The policeman went away with tears in his eyes to the station, and his captain ordered him to go back and do everything he could for the family. The undertaker said he would bury the body for thirty-five dollars, but when he heard exactly how desperate was the situation, he, too, turned kinder than before—kinder, perhaps, than he had ever been in a business transaction — and said he would take his chances for his money. He got a better coffin than he had intended to give for the price, and drove to the morgue to prepare the body himself, as nicely as if John Ruppert had been earning a dollar an hour instead of a dollar a day.

He set up the coffin in the room on the right-hand side as you go in, a room which the Rupperts had, not long before, been obliged to strip until there was only a bureau left in it. He threw a black cloth over the coffin, tied a rosette and streamers of black crape to the front door, and went his way.

The night after, at ten o'clock, Mrs. Ruppert was still lying on the bench which served for a sofa in the front bedroom. She was still sobbing, but with-

out the relief of tears, for she had cried until she could cry no more. She seemed dazed, almost unconscious. She did not even raise her head when the reporters and the people from the station-house and the coroner's office and the neighborhood all came in and stood around, hats in hand, or peeped into the little back room at the little Christmas tree.

The Christmas spirit was alive there. Death itself had not been able to drive it away. It fell upon whoever entered the door, no matter what his errand, for all spoke in softened tones and offered sympathy, or stealthily wiped away unbidden tears—and all, even the poorest, left sums of money with the neighborhood women. These, like the rest, were under the Christmas spell. Had they not come away from their own homes and loved ones to look after this stricken hearth and to comfort the widow?

And now and then some visitor would peep into the little back room at the little Christmas tree, which still stood in the corner, shining and gorgeous, with three children still looking at it over the top of the German mattress.

MY BORROWED TORPEDO-BOAT

"SCRATCH a Russian and you'll find a Tartar underneath." This is a saying which applies to most Russians perhaps, but not to M. Gremurief. A more gentle soul could scarcely have distinguished any babe in arms, nor could a sweeter disposition easily be found even among the women throughout all the Russias. Since I knew him, it is almost needless to say that he kept a curio-shop, for the chances usually are, in my travels, that it is to the dealers in bric-à-brac that I pay my earliest and most frequent visits. His shop was in St. Petersburg, close to the Moscow railway station. It was a very small one, yet it contained more altar ornaments of real old Russian bronze, more beautiful old ikons, and more ancient oddities in brass and gilt ware than any other shop I had seen.

He and his place offered the unlikeliest material for an adventure, and yet they provided me with the greatest sensation of my life—an adventure

which I should not like to pass through again, and yet one which I would not have missed on any account. To state the facts briefly: During one of my visits to M. Gremurief's shop I heard the cough of a third person sounding apparently in the room where only we two were sitting. In itself it startled me sufficiently, though the manifest consternation of the shopkeeper gave me much more to think of after I had parted with him. I asked him what the noise was, and it was painful to hear how he stuttered and stammered out a denial that there had been any sound unless, perhaps, he himself had coughed without being aware of having done so. On another occasion, while I was seated in the shop conversing with my acquaintance, a part of the wall behind us shook, and a costly Chinese drug-jar fell on the floor in pieces. Again I was much more disturbed by the frightened, guilty manner of the merchant than by the peculiar occurrence itself. Again, on another day, I sought to relieve my lonesomeness with his company. To tell the truth, I was not adverse to discovering the mystery that brooded in his shop and gave rise to the incidents I have mentioned. The door stood half open, and I sprang up the steps and inside with an agility which left no time for the inmates of the place to take warning of my

visit. As I entered, a man leaped from where he had been standing as if into the wall. I saw his figure distinctly in the gloom of the dusky place, and next I saw that he pulled after him a sort of bureau or set of shelves which I had imagined to be an immovable fixture of the shop.

As if he was fascinated by the sight, or perhaps horror-stricken, M. Gremurief watched the cabinet slide into its place, and I watched his face and its look of alarm. Then we greeted each other and made an effort to converse together. It was impossible. Both of us were too ill at ease.

"I will say good-bye to you," I remarked. "There is evidently something wrong here, and, in Russia, I have no desire to meddle, or even to intrude, where there is anything dubious or underhand. It is too dangerous."

"In the name of all the saints, don't misjudge me!" he exclaimed. "I live in sufficient terror as it is, without the added alarm it would bring should you go away to harbor a wrong impression of me. I am in your power, but you are a foreigner and cannot have any interest in ruining me. Come to-night at eight o'clock, when the day's business is over, and I will bare my secret to you."

At that hour I returned and found Gremurief and a second man, a stranger, awaiting me. The

shopkeeper was in a high fever of excitement, and plunged into his story almost as soon as I was seated. The stranger sat shyly by in silence, with his eyes on the floor. The story Gremurief told me was that he had a wild and reckless son who was, what he called, a patriot, or, as we would say, a nihilist. This son, an engineer at work in Moscow, had sent to him the stranger who sat with us, asking that he be concealed until the zeal of the police in searching for him should be dulled, and he dared to try to make his way out of Russia. Gremurief disavowed sympathy with the nihilists, and I believe he was pursuing no other interest than affection for his son.

"This man is not merely an outlaw," he said, looking at the fugitive with something more of sternness than I had supposed he had the spirit to command, "he is a bungler and a fool. Twice he aroused your suspicion by the noises he made, and, finally, after repeatedly risking exposure by coming out of his hiding-place, he allowed you to discover him."

"My feet ached," said the man, with the look of one who knows he is speaking foolishly. "Sometimes I preferred a lifetime in Siberia to even another ten minutes of the pain which so much standing caused me."

"You will not complain of that pain any more," said the shopkeeper. "To-night you go out on your travels. I will not harbor you another day."

Then followed a dialogue of the most moving character. The fugitive pleaded with the shopkeeper to reconsider his cruel decision and allow him to remain. M. Gremurief was firm and almost pitiless. He declared that he had lived in terror long enough, and could endure no more of it. The wretched outlaw pleaded and moaned, and even I interceded for him—like a fool. But the shopkeeper was obdurate.

"You hid Nikolavitch for three months," said the nihilist, "and no harm came to you; yet in my case, after only a week, your patience vanishes, and you are going to abandon me to the wrath of the Czar."

"I did not hide Nikolavitch," the shopkeeper replied, angry, truthful, and completely off his guard.

"Oh, you did—you surely did," the man insisted. "Every patriot in our circle in Moscow knows that you did."

"No, my poor friend," M. Gremurief replied. "You are the first nihilist who, to my knowledge, has ever entered my premises — except my misguided son, of course."

"By whom, then, was Nikolavitch hidden?" the

nihilist persisted. "You know it was only your kind heart that saved him. Why do you not only spoil a good deed, but put a lie against yourself on God's books?"

"Fool," said Gremurief, "it was not I, but the Princess Golrouki who hid Nikolavitch."

"Take me to her, then. At least tell me where she is. She will not have a heart of marble like you."

"She is at her home in the city," Gremurief answered. "But you shall not go to her, for she has had risk enough. Her hair has been bleached by constant danger for twenty years. Hereafter she shall enjoy the peace she has earned."

At this the man sprang to his feet, and, throwing back his head, so as to take on the attitude which painters give to a victor in the Roman arena, he almost petrified us both by what he said:

"The Princess shall indeed receive what she has earned. I am Denisov, of the police—you know my rank and reputation. I have now all the proof I need against your son, yourself, the Princess, and many others. You cannot escape; you will find the front and back of this house guarded all night. In the morning you will be taken before my superiors. Your American friend may take his leave. I will pay my respects to him later, when he will

"'I AM DENISOV OF THE POLICE'"

answer to the authorities for the company he keeps and the republican sentiments I have heard him express during his visits here."

Twenty hours later I sauntered into the hotel at which I was stopping. Nothing had come of the police official's threat, and I could not bring myself to believe that I was in danger. I passed along a side corridor towards my room. Suddenly a man who was walking ahead of me turned right-about face and spoke to me, with a torrent of whispered words.

"The police are waiting for you in your apartment," he said. "They have taken your money and your passport, which you left with the landlord. Go to your room, and nothing can save you from continuing until the oblivion of Siberia envelops you. They connect you with some great nihilistic plot, and, though you are innocent, they will swear your liberty away in order to gain the more credit for zealous work. I am a friend of the Princess Golrouki, who has risked everything, and now has lost everything, for the cause of liberty. She prays for your escape. Turn at once, follow me, but do not speak to me either in this house or in the street unless you wish me harm. I will take you by a back way to the street. Then you must shift for yourself."

In an hour I was aboard the ship *Alexis* as it steamed down the Neva, bound for Stockholm. It was the same boat on which I had come to St. Petersburg, and the captain and I were friends. In the morning, at breakfast, I sat at the captain's left hand, and he said, motioning to the opposite seat, "Inspector Denisov, a high official of the police, is on board and will eat with us. He is on a serious errand. A foreign nihilist is among the passengers, it seems, and is to be arrested at Helsingfors, if he does not try to get off the ship before we reach there. He is charming—the inspector, I mean. I will introduce you. By-the-way, you have not yet given me your passport. I must trouble you for it, as our companion at table desires the papers of all the passengers to be submitted to his inspection."

I blushed rose red and stammered something about my papers being in my trunk. For an instant the hope that I could retain possession of the paper lingered in my mind, but I quickly dismissed it. Of what use could it be to postpone events, since it could be but a question of a few hours' time when all my belongings, and my person as well, must pass into the custody of my pursuer.

"It is all right, since I know you," said the captain. "Give it to me as soon as it is conven-

ient." Then the official came in to breakfast—the only man I feared in all the world. We were introduced, but he did not betray any peculiar interest in me, and thereafter we chatted at our mealtime meetings as if there was nothing whatever, except agreeable acquaintanceship, between us.

At Helsingfors, in Finland, the sun had set, and the night was moonless and cloudy. The darkness soon became intense. When the ship turned to make the harbor, Inspector Denisov touched me upon the shoulder and said:

"You will go ashore here. I have had your luggage put on deck. Though you have no passport, I will answer for you to the police."

I turned and, walking across the ship and then the whole length of it to the stern, sprang overboard without a notion of what I was going to do if I should have the good fortune to save myself from drowning. I merely took the precaution to see that no one was looking or was near by. Being an excellent swimmer, I struck out boldly, and directed my strokes towards the dark shore beside the lights of Helsingfors, many miles away; perhaps farther than a man should try to swim.

"Why so fast?" I heard, in the voice of Denisov, behind me in the water. "Can we not swim together for company's sake?"

I was startled and mortified to find that he was still pursuing me, and in this fashion, so desperate for him as well as for me, I made no reply, nor did I moderate my strokes.

"This is not at all a Russian bath," he called again. "Don't you find it cold?"

I would not answer him. I swam on and on, and, hearing no more from him after half an hour had passed, was hopeful—I confess it—that he had taken a cramp and gone down. After several minutes more of sturdy swimming I saw a long black hulk rising above the water before me. I swam to it, found a rope hanging down to the water's edge, and clambered up the steel side of the vessel, to find myself on the deck of a torpedo-boat. When I stood upright, a man in naval uniform came up out of a round hole in the deck and endeavored to talk with me. While he and I were trying to understand each other, a cry in Russian, coming from the water beside the vessel, interrupted us. It was Denisov's voice. The man in uniform pulled him up on to the deck, and there he and I stood once more face to face—like me and my problem how to escape.

Denisov addressed himself with authority to the naval man, who touched his hat with servility and disappeared between decks.

"There is only one other man on board," Denisov said to me; "but fortunately this one is an engineer and the other is a stoker or fireman. This is a new vessel on its trial trip. It has not yet been delivered to the government, but I have asserted my authority, since it is a Russian vessel, and we are to be taken to the town. It is better than swimming. Will you go forward to the officers' quarters?"

"I will stay here," I replied.

"As you please," said he. "I think I will follow your example, since there is no one else to steer the boat. I advise you to go below. You will be ill if you do not go out of this raw wind."

"I may as well surrender to you," I said; and I noticed that, as I spoke, a tremor ran through the vessel, betokening the beginning of the movement of the engine.

"You are wise," he answered. "I wish I could promise you something more agreeable than Siberia. Still, if you have not seen that country it may be as well to have a look at it."

"You carry too many guns for me, as we say in America," I replied; and I felt the vessel quiver and shake, and heard the screw splashing in the water behind me.

Denisov, put somewhat more at ease by my dec-

laration of helplessness, tugged at his sopping clothes to get at his cigarettes, and find whether by any chance one of them was smokable. While he was awkwardly wrenching at his hand to release it from his wet pocket, I leaped forward, and, planting both hands upon his shoulders, flung him back into the gulf. At the same instant I ran to the wheel, and, putting it hard about, turned the vessel in a sharp curve out to sea, and westward towards Sweden—and freedom. The engineer was not putting on the headway that I required, so I ran down the light ladder-like companionway and yelled to him, "Politseiskoi govovite skorei; mukha —poshol skorei," a barbarous effort to say that the police officer bade him hurry, fly, go faster.

"Da, da," said the engineer, and the narrow wedge of a boat leaped ahead almost like a flying-fish, now partly above the little waves, now washing her foremost half in the water she threw up ahead, and all the time throbbing as if she would loosen the plates which sheathed her sides.

Successful as my bold effort for freedom at all hazards had thus far proved, I was far from confident that it could be carried out to the end. I knew that if there was a war-ship at any port on the coast between me and the Baltic, it would be ordered by telegraph to capture me; and, consider-

ing the powerful search-lights which all such vessels carry, how could I hope to escape? True, my boat could steam faster than a battle-ship, but a well-aimed shot would bring me to terms, if not to the bottom. And then there was the engineer! It would require nearly seven hours of steaming at the highest speed to reach the other side of the sea, and this man was only ordered to go to Helsingfors, close by. In a few minutes he would come up on deck to see why we had not ordered him to slow down or stop. He would find himself at sea. What then? I could not answer that question. I kept my place at the wheel, and trusted to luck — or pluck, whichever would serve best. As I had expected, presently the engineer came on deck. He asked me in pantomime and in Russian where the police officer was. I pointed below. He looked about him at the sea, and went back to his engine, puzzled and shaking his head.

"He will come up again," I said to myself, "and I will throw him down and tie him, leaving the engine to run itself. But where shall I get a rope?"

The vessel leaped onward as fast as ever boat ploughed sea on earth, and I stood at the wheel straining my eyes for men-of-war or headlands or moving vessels in our path. I fancied I heard a

human cry, but, as it was not repeated, felt certain that I had been mistaken.

In time I thought of the rope by which I had pulled myself aboard the boat. "The very thing I want," thought I, and, opening my pocket-knife to cut it with, I went to look for it, feeling the edge of the boat with one hand as I made my way on hands and knees. In the inky darkness I could not see two feet before me, yet I did distinguish something of lighter hue than the atmosphere on the edge of the deck. I reached out and felt—a human hand!

I passed my own hand over the side, and felt the sleeve of a tautened arm below the hand. Grasping it with both of my hands, and pulling with all my might, I felt the owner of the arm assisting me, and in another moment I had him so that he got a knee on the deck and was saved. I flashed my pocket-lamp in his face. It was Denisov. He tried to stand, but when I pulled him upon his feet he fainted and fell into my arms. I dragged him to the middle of the deck, and, after steadying the vessel's course, crept to the side again and cut off the rope, by which he had evidently clung to the vessel ever since we started. Then, long and hard, but wholly in vain, I tried to revive him. As he was warm and breathing, I ran below and fetched

up two blankets. After rolling him up in one and using the other as a pillow under his head, there seemed nothing more to be done for him. During the time spent in all this work we passed close beside two sailing-ships, half a mile apart, but were not noticed by the people aboard either one.

An hour must have passed before the engineer came on deck again. This time he was disturbed and vociferous. He signalled to me that Denisov was nowhere below. I flashed my light in the police official's face, and made signs that he was asleep. The mere glimpse which he got of the pallid face of my captive caused the engineer to suspect that he was being deceived. He bent forward to feel the body, but I pushed him back to an upright position and sternly bade him return to his post. He turned sullenly, and as he was lowering his body into the opening in the deck I sprang forward, passed the rope under and around his arms, and pinioned them securely behind his back. Then I assisted him down the ladder by holding the collar of his coat, and, following him to the engine-room, pressed the muzzle of my revolver against his forehead as a hint of what would befall him should he cause me any trouble.

For at least another hour the boat sped on, and I kept her to her course without further adventure.

Then the engineer called to me, and begged me, with much groaning, to untie his arms. I did so, and, with an alacrity that impressed me, he sprang to the engine and manipulated certain of its levers and faucets. I understood from the signs and motions he subsequently made that he desired to impress me with the necessity of his being free to use his hands in running the engine. He promised full obedience and the highest speed the engine could make. Greatly eased in mind, I left him, carrying my rope with me; but on deck I found Denisov moving restlessly and regaining consciousness.

When I spoke to him he said he was dead.

"Forgive my sins," he groaned; "I was drowned at sea, and there was no priest."

It was with great difficulty that I made him understand that he was alive and safe, but that I would not hesitate to throw him overboard again unless he acknowledged that the tables were turned and he had become my prisoner.

"You have saved my life," he said. "I will not put a straw in your way after this. Let me go below and get into bed."

"No," said I, on second thoughts, "I will not trust you. You have your duty to your Czar to perform, and that is above everything—even above

truth and honor—with you Russians. If you attempt to go below, if you even attempt to get on your feet, I swear I will kill you."

"You are right," he said. "I will be frank with you because you are brave, and I owe you thanks for taking me on board. I would break any oath if I could get a chance to take you back to Russia. Now, I will beg one favor: if we are overhauled by a Russian war-ship, promise to tie my hands, so that it shall be seen that you overpowered me."

"I will tie them now," said I. "Roll over on your stomach and put your hands behind you."

He obeyed. I pinioned him, as I had the engineer—like a fowl made ready for the oven. As I straightened back to an upright posture I drew a long breath and almost shouted. I believed myself sure of regaining my freedom.

On and on, ceaselessly, like a bullet skimming the sea, the arrow-like vessel shot forward, kicking the water behind it with its whirling foot. Hours passed—hours that were like days to me—and still we skimmed along. At what I thought was Hango, but what must have been a port of the Aland Islands, I saw a search-light flashing, streaming, sweeping the sea in the distance behind me. It never once was turned in my direction, and I

believe that the men who manipulated it did not imagine that my boat could have already passed them.

Gray came tingeing the east, and a faint cloud-like wall of distant land was becoming vaguely distinguishable a few miles ahead, when I noticed that the engine was slowing up. The engineer came on deck, and, after touching his cap in token of his respect, held out both hands with a gesture of despair. I bade Denisov question him.

"The fuel has run out," said he. "The engine will stop in a few minutes. The engineer says he sees land ahead, and asks if it is the Alands."

"It must be," I replied.

"You have done bravely," said Denisov; "but you have lost. I shall have the pleasure of your company all the way back again."

As he spoke my quick ears caught the sound of a steamer's screw in the distance. I ordered the engineer below, and scanned the sea. The engine stopped while I was looking and listening, and we began to crawl through the water. We were headed directly for a wooded shore, and were not above a mile from it. After looking at it intently for a few moments, I turned and saw the black mountainous hulk of a great ship breaking through the morning grayness.

"Go below instantly," I said to Denisov, and, lifting him to his feet, I almost pushed him down the hole in the deck. I was sure that he had heard and seen nothing of the ship which was bearing down on us, and I wanted him out of the way lest we should be hailed in Russian and he should answer in my place.

We crawled on, and the black monster shot ahead and passed us. I hoped we had not been seen—we were so small and low in the water—but presently I heard a confusion of voices on the great ship's deck, and next I saw her side-lights coming into view. My craft had been discovered, and my pursuer was turning to overhaul it.

When I was certain that this was the case I slipped overboard and began to swim for the shore, now not half a mile away. I heard the torpedo-boat hailed while I swam. From the beach I could see a small boat put out from the ship and move towards the torpedo-boat. At the same instant the morning mist thinned around the ship, and I saw that she was a battle-ship flying the French flag.

With fear spurring my heels I plunged into the woods and ran. It was evening before I came to a town and found that I was in Sweden.

BRUCE'S MIGHTY WEAKNESS

WHAT could be more unusual and out of place at a ladies' reception than an argument upon a serious subject between two of her devotees? Yet this happened at the house of Mrs. Whitehall in Washington Square, North, on the second of her Thursdays in February. It was in one of those great, dignified, old-fashioned mansions which are still to be found there and on Second Avenue, and which help to make us believe that there may be something in the tedious talk of old men who forever boast of "the good old times."

Of those whom Mrs. Whitehall honored with an invitation only one was very peculiar. The others were the sort of persons we know so very well that most of us, I suspect, are a little tired of them. It must be so, since they are like ourselves. The exceptional feature was one of the two men who indulged themselves in serious argument on that second Thursday. His name was

Bruce. Those who knew him at all knew that he was a very able electrician; only a salaried employé just then, of an Atlantic Cable Company, but full of promise as an inventor and as a man destined to carve out independence. However, that would not have helped him into the choice circle of Mrs. Whitehall's friends. Promissory notes are not cashed in society. The hard coin which he had to offer was that he was a nephew of Chief-Justice Donald Bruce, husband of a Knickerbocker millionairess.

We who are in society—and who is not in these days, when no one is so humble that his wife does not hold her Thursdays?—we weigh men differently according to the end of town in which we happen to be. Down-town we say that Bruce is eligible to our luncheon club because he is a reputable and engaging young man. Up-town we say we will admit him to our drawing-rooms because he is the nephew of his uncle and aunt—chief-justice and lady of millions.

Such receptions as Mrs. Whitehall's are alike as so many peas. In the front room a very few men and many women stood and sat about; the men with their gloves on to show that they understood that they were invited only to pay their respects and withdraw; the women wearing their capes

for the same reason — arrant nonsense, because, being of a neighborhood clique, they were certain to spend an hour or two, leaving the mere acquaintances to pop in, bow, chat a minute, and pop out. Two young girls presided over a punch-bowl in the parlor extension. They were dressed, from feet to frizzes, as nearly as possible like their favorite actresses in a play then raging farther uptown. Six of their young male admirers held the fort there, being on such evidently intimate terms with the bacchantes as to chill any mere callers and send them away shivering. The extension held an anteroom which attracted a few club men and bachelors, who lurked there, discussing politics and anathematizing ladies' receptions.

In the meantime, the misplaced dispute was under full headway in the main parlor, between young Mr. Bruce and the Rev. Dr. Hipstone, of St. Denis's Church, near by. The doctor was a typical Church-of-England clergyman. Of an athletic figure that had been neglected and was beginning to turn corpulent, he declared himself prosperous, complacent, and comfortable by every inch of his cloth and complexion—the one new, the other rosy. His admirable manners proved his breeding. His brow and the kindling light in his eyes declared him intellectual. His proud pose

spoke volumes for his conscience. He was such a man as may attract women's idolatry and men's respect at the same time.

Mr. Bruce was a man to turn and look at a second time even in a crowd. He had a broad, high forehead and deep, gray eyes, and was also what we call intellectual-looking. He was tall and of large frame. With his neat, particular dress, his fine features, and iron-gray and large mustachios, he would have been very handsome, except that he appeared to be "burned out." His cheeks were sunken and pale almost to yellowness. Deep lines, that had come twenty years too soon, rutted his face, and yet, or, rather, because of all this, he was interesting—*distingué*, people said.

"I hold that drunkenness is the worst sin in the calendar," said the Rev. Dr. Hipstone. Then he gave many reasons for his belief, some of them at length.

"And I know better, begging your pardon," said Mr. Bruce. "I know that gambling is worse. Gambling is a subtle, deadly poison that paralyzes every humane and gentle prompting," etc. He also enlarged upon his views.

The ladies were displeased when they heard the disputants raise their voices. They glanced at

one another and frowned. One of the traditions which women have perpetuated to their disparagement is that seriousness is out of place in the company of ladies.

"Pardon me a moment," Dr. Hipstone continued; "it is not gaming that crowds the poorhouses. It is not gaming that packs the madhouses and wrecks homes and breaks up families, and creates blear-eyed murderers, and wretched, crying wives, and forsaken children. All that is the work of drink."

"The trouble is that the world does not know about gambling," Mr. Bruce replied. He was now growing very earnest. "Men like you deny its fearful consequences, who ought to proclaim them. There are not thousands of anti-gambling brotherhoods to fill the air with lamentation over that vice, as the temperance folk do over drink. But there should be, for, having seen the effects of both vices, I insist that there should be even more effort to stop gambling than is directed against rum. Though drunkenness is bestial, it is, in a great measure, the outgrowth of good-fellowship, sympathy, and kindliness between man and man. The average drunkard is notoriously 'the good fellow'—that is to say, the genial, sympathetic, warm-hearted, sociable man. Some

drunkards fight and do murder and beat their wives, but the majority grow mellow with drink, and, though they ruin themselves, are very often well-meaning, hearty, kindly men."

"Upon my word, sir," exclaimed the clergyman, "I never heard anything so extraordinary! Surely, the virtues and charms of drunkards were never so strongly put before."

"I have no praise for them," said Bruce, "but I have some mercy. I argue that gambling poisons the soul instead of the body. The confirmed gambler is the meanest, most selfish, most cold-blooded, most savage creature—next to the Apache, and the Apache is an inveterate gambler —that I have seen in my life. The craving for play chills sensibility, congeals the heart, hardens sympathy, kills charity—oh, the havoc it plays in the human breast is awful! A thorough gambler will sell wife or daughter, will burn his home, will murder—for money to play with or to cover his losses. Drunkards do, in a moment of frenzy or stupidity, what they sorrow for when sober, but the crimes of the gambler are committed soberly, in cold blood, deliberately. They are planned, sir, after meditation. The basis of the drink habit is weakness, but gambling is based upon cupidity. Men who are drunkards are fools,

but gamblers are knaves, and — I beg pardon."

A gentleman, softly gloved, had touched young Bruce's shoulder.

"You are forgetting yourself, Mr. Bruce," he whispered.

Alas! Bruce had quite forgotten, not himself, but the others in the drawing-room. He had been carried away by strong feeling. The touch of the other man's hand made him start as if he had been shot. He turned to the clergyman and ended the argument with a rude sentence: "But what's the use? You do not know anything of these subjects and I assure you I do."

Then he bade Mrs. Whitehall good-night, bowed to the others, and left the room to get his coat and hat and depart.

He went straight to the house of the clergyman with whom he had just ceased disputing, and waited there, in his study. Nervous to an extreme degree, when Dr. Hipstone came Bruce hastened out to meet him half-way along the hall, and, seizing his hand, led him into the study.

"You do not know anything about gambling," said Bruce. "That is as it should be. It shows that you are good and honest. That is why I have come here—not to argue with you, but to

tell you about gambling—about myself—to get strength through confession."

"You!" the clergyman exclaimed; "you are not—but sit down, my friend, and tell me what has excited you so."

"I *must* tell you," said the electrician, not sitting down, but pacing to and fro like a caged beast. "To relieve my mind, to tell of my folly, is my last chance. If it does not curb me to have made known the horrible truth—which no one suspects—nothing will. I must tell you, or my sister, or my employers. If I tell the president of my company, he will discharge me and precipitate my ruin. If I tell my sister, it will break her heart. If I tell you, you may comfort me; at any rate, the shame of telling you everything will nerve me to control myself. I am a gambler—a confirmed gambler—a proof of all that I told you at Mrs. Whitehall's to-day."

"Be seated, my dear fellow," said the clergyman, "and tell me as much or as little as you think best."

"I will tell you all," said Bruce.

He did so, to the clergyman's surprise and no little to his discomfiture, for he heard of things of which he had never dreamed, a tale of such depravity as he had imagined was confined to ex-

ceptional victims among the ignorant and dissolute. He heard the confession of a man who, to feed a diseased and dreadful appetite, had flung away the last of his patrimony; of one who had secretly wasted the little store of money laid up by the trusting sister whose guardian and companion he was. He heard one, whom he knew to be honored among men, confess to having entered his own house at midnight to rob it in such a manner as to lead to the belief that burglars—really less criminal than himself—had broken in there. He heard this whited-sepulchre—a man whom he had often seen in his church—admit that he had gambled away even the little sums his sister had given him to pay her petty debts to tradesmen. And now this worried, desperate wretch, who had surrendered himself like a leaf in a gale of passion, was at his rope's end. Any day, any moment, the smaller thefts might, nay, surely would, become known, and the punishment of exposure would begin.

The gambler ended his story in a convulsive fit of tears, and the clergyman soothed him as a woman might have done, with an arm across his back and a comforting hand patting the farther shoulder. Presently he turned to the source of all his usefulness and inspiration—to prayer to

the Almighty. Upon his knees he pleaded for strength for the miserable man by his side.

Young Bruce went away stronger, more hopeful, and with a firmer resolution against further surrender to his besetting vice than he had ever before mustered. Moreover, he went straight to the gambling-houses—not to fight the enemy, but to capitulate and beg for quarter. "I will tell you what I will do," he said, as he parted from Dr. Hipstone, "I will go to the dens where I have gambled, I will tell the proprietors what a pass I have reached, and I will appeal to them not to admit me to their places any more."

Broadway was ablaze with electric light and troops of pedestrians were hurrying to the theatre, the men walking rapidly and the women hanging upon their arms, tripping along, excited by the anticipation of delight at the playhouses, by the rustling of their own new gowns, and by the joy of being out for the night with the men they owned or hoped to own. Two sorts of men stood aside and looked on at this joyous nightly procession. Some were strangers, just from dinner in the hotels, and undecided what to do. A few were the gamblers and the "cappers," as the decoys are called, for the "hells" thereabout. They were on certain busy corners that are familiar to all city men,

except the police, as their regular haunts. These gamblers and their stool-pigeons are distinguishable from other men by a sort of loaferly and loud effort not to appear loaferly and loud. They miss looking like gentlemen by an angle of ten degrees in the cant of their hats, by an extra pound of jewelry, by a mere diamond or two, by a quarter's worth of dye on their mustaches—by such little trifles, which are tremendous. Though they are wolves of a higher grade than the coyotes who pick pockets, they are wolves nevertheless. Their faces are not wolfish, because they are not so often hunted or so often hungry as the other parasites.

At the first corner that held a group of them young Bruce turned and walked until he reached the open door of a dark and narrow hallway. It was beside a dyer's shop, which gave the whole building a proper and an innocent air. In the doorway stood a man who would have stopped and questioned him had Bruce been a stranger. As it was, he nodded and asked, "H'are yer?" and stepped aside to let Bruce pass. At the top of the first flight of stairs, at the end of a lighted hallway, was the door to what was known in certain circles as "Curley Snow's Game." The sharp rattle of the counters or "chips" and the tremulous song of the marble rolling on the roulette wheel

penetrated the door and sounded faintly in the hallway. Faintly, but oh! how sweetly to the gambler's ear. For what the whir of the reel is to the fisherman, what the slat-tat of sheets whipping in the wind is to a yachtsman, what the chink of double-eagles is to a miser, or the patter of two thousand hand-palms is to an actor—what those sounds are to those persons is what the click-k-k-k of the chips is to a gambler.

Bruce knocked on the door—once, and then three times—and instantly a shaft of light, stronger than that in the hallway, shot through the door. It came through the peep-hole that every such door has: a round orifice covered at the back by just such a swinging contrivance as one sees before most key-holes, but larger, for the gambling-house peep-hole may be an inch in diameter or four times as large. A darky's white eye was applied to this hole, and then the door was swung open to admit Mr. Bruce. If he had stopped to look at the door he would have seen that it was three times as thick as an ordinary one, made of several thicknesses of oak, backed by thin iron and fitted with heavy bolts, and with a strong iron bar in addition to the usual lock. The door, so like the barricade of a sally-port in an old-time fortress, was the result of that eccentricity which leads our

police to burst into gambling-dens after they have been prodded into raiding them—and after they have given the gamblers warning.

But Mr. Bruce had seen many such doors, and did not look at this one. He entered the gambling-saloon and looked about for the proprietor. The brilliant saloon embraced all that floor except the hallway. It was set about with "lay-outs," each with chairs around it for a few men with sufficient money to be able to sit down and play those ingenious "systems" which all gamblers who can afford to do so are certain to adopt. By their sides and behind them stood the other players, and behind each lay-out were the dealers and watchers, or the dealers and croupiers, according to the nature of the game. The silver wheels and silver card-frames, the ornamental ivory chips, the green cloths with copies of gaudy playing-cards upon them, the yielding carpet, the bright lights, the pictures—all were parts of an attractive scene. The half-quiet, broken by the click and whir of the implements and the low, monotonous calls of the dealers, was typical of such a place. The well-dressed players seldom spoke, and then only to mutter a word or two to their neighbors. Fixed interest in what was at hand marked every man's behavior. Not even Love is so uncertain a god as

Luck, and Luck's votaries give no one else attention when they worship him. The players watch the cards or the wheel and their money. The dealers watch the implements and the bets. The "watchers," seated by the dealer, watch everybody and everything.

Mr. Bruce looked about him for Curley Snow, the man who ran the game. When he saw him he asked if he might speak to him privately for a moment in the "office"—a side-room which once had been a hall bedroom. Curley Snow was a type of a gambler grown rich and comfortable—of an already considerable number of such gamblers who have invested money in race-horses and race-tracks, and are now spoken of in the newspapers as horsemen instead of outlaws. What, under heaven, has dignified so many scoundrels and rehabilitated so many outcasts as the patient, honest, innocent horse? The greatest burden of the noblest beast of burden is the sorry lot of wretches who live upon him or trade upon his good name. Curley Snow was a horseman in the newspapers and at the race-meetings, and this had included decent men among his acquaintances. It had given him a sneaking self-respect. Tall and corpulent, ruddy, well-dressed, and easy in manner, he would pass for an elderly banker but for a

mysterious, indefinable trace of a protracted hard life in his face—a trace that was strengthened by two or three scars. He could play the gentleman for a while at a time, but frequent lapses into slang, vulgarity, and bad grammar spoiled each effort. Whenever he was crossed, the blackguard broke through all his veneer. And at all times he was as superstitious as a negro—as all gamblers are.

"Come in," said he to Bruce. "You and I won't quarrel. You can't quarrel with me. Your name is Bruce—tut, tut, you're—ah—in a gentleman's house and nothing reaches beyond the walls. You're—ah—the nephew of Chief-Justice Bruce—ah. I have the honor of your—ah—uncle's acquaintance. Went over on the—ah—*Paris* with him a couple of years since. Had him to my—ah—house in the city, to see my paintings. I know a number of judges. There's—ah—Judge Enright, I met on the Riviera larst yeah. Found he was fond of dining, and I took him to—ah—my clubhouse at the track. I gave him terrapin at—ah—eight dollars apiece, and canvas-back duck with Burgundy that was wunst Napoleon Third's, don't you know. 'Eat hearty,' I says, 'you won't git as good at home,' and he laughed. Do you—ah—like my pictures heah? Well, they cost a big stake, but they ain't a marker to them up to my house in

Fifty-seventh Street—no, by ——, not a marker. I've an undoubted—ah—Titian, not signed—a Rubens, sir, that the best experts say he painted, and—ah—but, my dear fellow, tell me what I kin do for you."

Bruce told him, frankly and fully, except that he tempered the truth by saying that he feared he might commit crime, instead of that he had done so.

"Certainly," said Curley Snow; "I'll give the orders, if you say so. I keep a place for gentlemen, by —— (the reader will confer an obligation if he will imagine most of the oaths that follow), "and I take no money that don't come, by ——, easy, and that ain't, by ——, clean. If you'll allow me, you're too high-strung to play, and you don't hold your head like a sport, or you wouldn't git into no such hole. But that's on the side. You come to a gentleman, sir, when you—ah—come to me. I've got nice folks, sir, and I know what it 'd be to hurt their pride. I've got a good mother, by ——, and as high-toned a sister as ever stretched a French gaiter; two women that would think they was disgraced if they knew who Curley Snow was. D——n me if the old lady ain't even a little skittish about my racing horses, the finest sport a gentleman can engage in, as I've told

her. But them two women live quiet in the country, and d——d if I believe either one knows a deck of cards by sight. Well, Bruce, now let's have a drink for good luck. Won't? Well, d——d if I don't take one on myself!

"Are you—ah—superstitious?" he inquired as he drained his glass. "A little? Well, I'm superstitious a d——d sight. Do you know why I told you you couldn't quarrel with me, soon's you come in? It was because of a stock dream that comes to me half a dozen times a year. It's a double zero on me, every time. I dreamed larst night, you know, that a gentleman—ah—touched me, understand, for some money, and d——d if I had a cent about me except my lucky piece. See! here it is—a Mexican dollar. I took this and the mate to it off of a Greaser's dead body in New Mexico in '83, when I was dead-strapped; hadn't a cent to keep me out of Hades, and nothing to eat but my dirk-knife. (An angel couldn't get along down there without a dirk, you know.) I hunted up a game, and put down one of them dollars and lost it. Then I let go the other, and I won a hatful. From that day to this I ain't had a serious streak of bad luck, and I've kept that dead Greaser's last dollar in my pocket. You couldn't get it from me for Ehret's brewery. I'd be better off if I lost my

skin than if I lost that. Well, when that dream is dealt to me, I always think I only have that dollar (and a little charm I wear around my neck, 'gin sickness), and I can tell you I know what it means. It means I mustn't lose my temper next day, and I daresn't make a trade or a bargain, and if I speak to a red-headed man the gout will come on me before night. That's as true as gospel. Must you—ah—go? Well, arfter a bit you'll get out of your—ah—difficulties all right. Delighted to be of service, I'm suah. Well—ah—so long, Mr. Bruce; so long."

At the next door to which Bruce went with his peculiar request the proprietor was an equally good representative of the lower stratum of the fraternity—of the wolves that are hungry. Curtly and frankly he told the young man that his request "wasn't business," and could not be entertained for an instant. "I'm here to get the boodle of just such babies as you," said he, "and you can bet I don't care how you come by it. You can pinch it or forge for it or hock every dollar's worth you own, and, so long as it is good stuff, fetch it around. I'll take it all if the cards run my way."

Heart-sick, Bruce went to the third den—the last he had the courage to visit. This time his request was promptly granted, but for a curious

reason. The place was not prospering, and the beetle-headed, superstitious proprietor was at his wits' end where to lay the blame. He was too glad to credit Bruce with some of it.

"You needn't ask twicet," said he. "I've been keepin' cases on you for some time, and I think you are the worst hoodoo that ever queered a game. That's what I'm a-sayin'. I've seen a good many hoodoos—red-headed, cock-eyed, and crippled—but none of them comes up to you. You'd queer a slot-machine. As long as you're in a place every man wins except yourself. Last time you was here—if Reggie Monteagle didn't win $10,000, and went and blew it in at Curley Snow's. Yes, Monteagle, that's been an angel for every game in town till he'd run through the half-million his father left him. Bet your life, I'll give you the double cross at the door. Good-night, sir, you'd ruin the Bank of England if you only stepped in to see the building—and lose your pile at the same time."

That was on a Friday night. On Saturday Mr. Bruce put his week's salary into his sister's hands, the better to enable him to resist temptation. On Monday night temptation came, like a hot wave of fever or as a squall strikes a summer sea. Bruce started at a brisk walk for the house of a friend,

to spend the evening, but the poisonous craving for play had seized him. It was in his blood. It made him tremble like a man stricken with an ague. His pace slackened, then he hesitated and stood still; then he turned right-about and made for Broadway and some gambling-hell—any one that would admit him. Little he cared where, so long as he could gamble. But he was out of money. He had only a few nickels in his pocket —not the price of one half-dollar chip. He tried to think of a way to get money. The nearest pawn-shop would be closed before he could reach it, and, if not, he had no superfluity about him except his umbrella. What was he to do? How often he had been in that quandary of late! So often that now there was no friend or shopkeeper of whom he could borrow.

He came to Fifth Avenue and to a great and famous club-house which rose like a mountain of stone at one corner. A wickeder, more desperate prompting than that which already mastered him now entered his mind. Again he hesitated. It was useless. He must have money with which to satisfy the mad desire to play. In his hand he carried an umbrella with a shining metal handle. He took out his penknife and cut deep into the wood below this handle and broke it off and flung

away the umbrella. Pocketing the handle, he turned down the dark side-street until he was beyond the light of the avenue's lamps. Then he waited on a curb-stone. Several men came out of the club-house, but turned towards the avenue. At last one took the other direction, towards Bruce. At the instant the man was beside him, Bruce, trembling and all but losing his nerve for the deed, turned upon him and pointed the gleaming umbrella handle at his face. He threatened the man in the only words of which he could think—the old formula of Blackheath, "Your money or your life!" The astonished wayfarer stopped and opened his mouth as if to speak.

"Utter a word and I'll kill you. I'm desperate," said Bruce.

The man sprang at Bruce and, with the grasp of a vise, gripped the hand that held the shining weapon.

"Bruce," said he, "is it you, or am I mistaken?"

Bruce staggered like a bullock that receives the blow of an axe.

"My God! Dr. Hipstone, is it you?" he exclaimed. "You! how—"

"How providential!" said the clergyman, releasing him. "But how shameful! how horrible! Put up your pistol and come with me."

"If it were a pistol I would use it—I would kill myself with it—but it is only a piece of metal," said the poor wretch.

"Kill yourself!" the clergyman exclaimed. "What are you? Are you a savage, or a madman? Kill yourself? With all your wickedness and folly unpardoned? End your life at this time—such a life as you are leading? Say, rather, that you pray God that you may live out a long lifetime in which to work unceasingly to atone for your crimes. You shameful, wicked fool! You coward! You miserable coward!"

"Oh, sir, you cannot say anything that I do not deserve," said Bruce.

"Forgive me, I beg of you," the clergyman replied; "I did not mean to speak like that. I also am weak. I lost my self-control."

"You need not hold me," said Bruce. "I shall not run. I will walk with you to the station-house."

"The station-house?" said the doctor, releasing his arm; "what have I to do with the station-house? It is to my home I ask you to go, there to see you down on your knees, seeking that aid which alone can save a man like you. There are men who seem to get along without God, but there are others who cannot, and you are one. Come

with me and commit yourself to Him for strength and guidance. Come and hear me thank Him that my visit to a parishioner in that club-house led to your meeting me instead of some man who would have sent you into the company of felons, if not of sinners in endless torment."

On the following Sunday many sermons were preached in town, but only one that electrified its hearers. That sermon swept them along with the orator and held them bound, as if the pulpit were a dynamo that burdened the air with magnetism. That was because the preacher talked from his heart instead of his head, and told something he had learned from life instead of from books. It was the Rev. Dr. Hipstone who did this, while Bruce sat in a pew before him, struggling to hide his emotion.

The good rector of St. Denis's assured his hearers, and convinced them, that no vice was so black and deadly as gambling.

THE END

By RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

A YEAR FROM A REPORTER'S NOTE-BOOK. Illustrated by R. Caton Woodville, T. de Thulstrup, and Frederic Remington, and from Photographs taken by the Author. $1 50.

THREE GRINGOS IN VENEZUELA AND CENTRAL AMERICA. Illustrated. $1 50.

ABOUT PARIS. Illustrated by C. D. Gibson. $1 25.

THE PRINCESS ALINE. Illustrated by C. D. Gibson. $1 25.

THE EXILES, AND OTHER STORIES. Illustrated. $1 50.

VAN BIBBER, AND OTHERS. Illustrated by C. D. Gibson. $1 00; Paper, 60 cents.

THE WEST FROM A CAR-WINDOW. Illustrated by Frederic Remington. $1 25.

OUR ENGLISH COUSINS. Illustrated. $1 25.

THE RULERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. Illustrated. $1 25.

Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental

Mr. Davis has eyes to see, is not a bit afraid to tell what he sees, and is essentially good natured. . . . Mr. Davis's faculty of appreciation and enjoyment is fresh and strong: he makes vivid pictures.—*Outlook*, N. Y.

Richard Harding Davis never writes a short story that he does not prove himself a master of the art.—*Chicago Times.*

HARPER & BROTHERS, Publishers
NEW YORK AND LONDON

☞ *Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on receipt of the price.*

By HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

RODEN'S CORNER. A Novel. With Illustrations by T. de Thulstrup. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 75.

An extremely interesting and well-written novel.—*Spectator*, London.

A story that is far too interesting to lay down until the last page is turned.—*St. James's Gazette*, London.

He handles it with vigor, and maintains in this new field the reputation gained by his former novels.—*Outlook*, N. Y.

THE SOWERS. A Novel. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

"The Sowers," for subtlety of plot, for brilliancy of dialogue, and for epigrammatic analysis of character, is one of the cleverest books of the season.—*Churchman*, N. Y.

There have been few such good novels for years.—*Illustrated London News.*

The book is strong, epigrammatic, and logical.—*Critic*, N. Y.

A story of absorbing interest from the first page to the last.—*Scotsman*, Edinburgh.

WITH EDGED TOOLS. A Novel. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

Mr. Merriman is so original, and has such a nice knack of putting things together, that he keeps up the interest on every page. . . . The story ought to be one of the successful romances of the season.—*N. Y. Times.*

A remarkable novel. It is long since we have read so good a novel as this.—*N. Y. Mail and Express.*

FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER. A Novel. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, $1 25.

A book of unusual force. It contains a remarkably acute study of a selfish and silly woman—one almost perfect in construction.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

We have no hesitation in recommending it as a decidedly good and entertaining novel.—*Spectator*, London.

THE PHANTOM FUTURE. A Novel. Post 8vo, Cloth, $1 25.

To those who relish a minute and searching analysis of character, and who appreciate refinement and purity of style, we may recommend "The Phantom Future." . . . A charming story.—*N. Y. Sun.*

HARPER & BROTHERS, Publishers
NEW YORK AND LONDON

☞ *Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on receipt of the price.*

BETH
COLLEGE
LIBRARY
DISCARD

813.4
R139p

85639